

# ON ISIS AND OSIRIS.

## Plutarch

I. All good things, O Clea, it behoves persons that have sense to solicit from the gods. But more especially now that we are in quest of the knowledge of themselves (so far as such knowledge is attainable by man), do we pray to obtain the same from them with their own consent: inasmuch as there is nothing more important for a man to receive, or more noble for a god to grant, than Truth. For all other things which people require, the Deity who gives them doth not possess, nor use for his own purposes. For the Godhead is not blessed by reason of his silver and gold, nor yet almighty through his thunders and lightnings, but on account of knowledge and intelligence, and this is the finest thing of all that Homer hath said, when he pronounced concerning the gods:—

“Both have one source, and both one country bore,  
But Jove was first born, and his *knowledge* more.”

He has represented the sovereignty of Jupiter as more majestic on account of his knowledge and wisdom, being at the same time the more ancient of the two. And I am of opinion that the happiness of the eternal life which is the attribute of God consists in his not being ignorant of future events, in virtue of his knowledge, for if the knowing and understanding of events were taken away, then immortality becomes not *life* but *duration*.

II. On this account a desire for religious knowledge is an aiming at Truth, particularly that relating to the gods—a pursuit containing both in the acquisition and in the search a reception, as it were, of things sacred—an occupation more pious than any observation of abstinence, or religious service: but particularly well-pleasing to this goddess who is the special object of *thy* devotion; for she is both wise, and a lover of wisdom; as her name appears to denote that, more than any other, *knowing* and *knowledge* belong to her. For “Isis” is a Greek word, and so is “Typhon,” her enemy, for he is “puffed up” by want of knowledge and falsehood, and tears to pieces, and puts out of sight, the sacred word which the goddess again gathers up and puts together, and gives into the charge of those initiated into the religion; whilst by means of a perpetually sober life, by abstinence from many kinds of food and from venery, she checks intemperance and love of pleasure, accustoming people to endure her

service with bowels not enervated by luxury, but hardy and vigorous; the object of all which is the *knowledge* of the First, the Supreme, and the Intelligible; whom the goddess exhorts you to seek after, for he is both by her side, and united with her. The very name of her Temple clearly promises both the communication and the understanding of *That which is*—for it is called the “Ision,” [“The entering-place,” as if derived from the Greek.] inasmuch as *That which is* shall be known if we *enter* with intelligence and piously into the sacred rites of the goddess.

III. Besides this, many have made her out to be daughter of Hermes; many others, of Prometheus: of whom the latter they hold to be the inventor of wisdom and fore-knowledge; Hermes, of grammar and of music. For which reason, of the Muses at Hermopolis they call the foremost one “Isis,” and “Justice-Wisdom,” as hath been stated; and they show the divine mysteries to such as be truly and rightfully styled “carriers of sacred things,” and “wearers of sacred robes”: these are they that carry in the soul, as it were in a copper, the sacred story respecting the gods that cleanses the recipient from all superstition, and magical follies: and who *wrap* themselves up, sometimes in things black and dusky, at other times bright and conspicuous—darkly showing forth the same notions as regards opinion of the gods as are expressed with respect to the sacred vestment. For which reason, the circumstance that the votaries of Isis, upon their death, are clothed with these robes, is a symbol that they go into the next world carrying with them this *Word*, [The revealed Truth.] and nothing else. For it is not, Clea, the wearing of beards and the dressing in long gowns that makes people philosophers; neither does the *linen surplice* and *shaven crown* make votaries of Isis, but the real Isiacist is he that is competent to investigate by the aid of the Word, the symbolism, and the ceremonies connected with these deities (after he has been lawfully empowered so to do); and who meditates upon the Truth which is involved in them.

IV. For it is a fact that most people do not understand that most general, and insignificant circumstance, for what reason the priests cut off their hair, and wear linen robes: some do not trouble themselves at all to know the cause for these two rules, whilst others say that they abstain from the use of wool, as they do from the flesh, out of veneration for the *sheep*; that they shave the head in token of their mourning (for Osiris), and that they wear linen on account of the color the flax in blossom displays, which resembles the smiling atmosphere encompassing the earth. But the real cause is the same for all, because (as Plato observes), it is not lawful for one not pure to handle what is pure. Now no superfluity of nutrition or

excrement is either chaste or pure. Now it is out of such superfluity that wool and hair, and down, and the nails, spring and grow. For it were absurd that people should divest themselves of their own hair, shaving the body very smoothly, during the fasts, and yet should envelope themselves in the hair of beasts, and we ought to suppose that when Hesiod says:—

“Nor from the five-branched thing, on holy day,  
Cut with the steel the dry from green away,”

He teaches that people ought to make themselves clear from such things beforehand, and so keep the festival, not in the middle of the religious services to occupy themselves with the cleaning and the removal of excrementitious things. Again, the flax springs out of what is immortal, the earth, and produces an edible fruit, and furnishes a smooth and cleanly clothing, that does not weigh one down with the covering, and well-suited also to any season, and is least of all others apt to breed lice, as they say, concerning all which points there is another legend.

V. The priests so greatly dislike the nature of excrementitious things, that they not only reject most kinds of pulse, and the flesh of sheep and swine, as producing much superfluity of nutriment, but during the fasts they even banish all salt from their meals, assigning many other reasons for so doing, and particularly that salt makes people more fond of drinking and of eating, by sharpening the appetite: for to consider, as Aristagoras pretends, that salt is not pure because multitudes of little insects are caught and die in it as it is congealing, is mere folly. They are said also to give the Apis drink out of a well of his own, but to keep him away from the Nile; not that they hold the Nile water to be polluted by reason of the crocodiles, as some think, for nothing is so venerated by Egyptians as the Nile, but because drinking the water of the Nile is supposed above all other to fatten, and produce corpulence; for they do not wish to have the Apis in such condition, nor themselves either, but to render their bodies active and lightly moved by their souls, and not to weigh down and crush the divine part by the mortal ones growing strong and preponderating.

VI. As for *wine*, they that serve the god at Heliopolis, do not usually carry it into the temple, for the reason that it is not decent to drink when the Lord and King of day is looking on. The others use it indeed, but sparingly, and keep many fasts where wine is forbidden; during which they spend their time in arguing, learning, and seeking things pertaining to religion: but the kings used to drink a measured quantity, prescribed by the sacred books (as Hecataeus relates in his History), although they were also priests. They began to drink from the reign of Psammetichus, for before him they drank

no wine, neither did they make libation of it as a thing acceptable to the gods, but as the blood of the gods' greatest enemies, out of whom they believe it sprung when they were fallen, and mingled with the earth, for which reason the being drunk makes men out of their senses and furious, inasmuch as they are then possessed by the authors of the blood. This story Eudoxus tells us in the second book of his "Travels," is so related by the priests.

VII. As to sea fish, all do not abstain from every sort, but from some kinds only, as for instance, the natives of Oxyrynchites abstain from all that are caught with a hook; for worshipping as they do the fish called *oxyrynchus*, they are afraid that the hook may not be unpolluted in consequence of an *oxyrynchus* having been caught by the same. The Syennites abstain from eating the *phagrus*; for that fish is thought to make its appearance together with the swelling of the Nile, and to announce its rise to rejoicing people, showing itself as a self-sent herald. But the priests abstain from all fish alike, and when on the first day of the ninth month the Egyptians feast each one on broiled fish before his house door, the priests do not taste thereof, but burn fish to ashes in front of their own doors, assigning two reasons for this usage; the one of which being religious and important, and connected with the pious inquiry concerning Osiris and Typhon, I will take up again further on; the other, an obvious and ready explanation, making out fish to be an unnecessary and over-luxurious article of diet, agrees with Homer who represents neither the luxurious Phaeaceans, nor the Ithacans, although islanders, as making use of fish, nor yet the shipmates of Ulysses on so long a voyage and out at sea, before they were reduced to the extreme of want. And in fine, they (the priests) hold the sea to proceed from *fire*, and as distinct from all else; neither a part nor an element of nature but something of a different sort, both destructive and the occasion of disease.

VIII. For nothing that is irrational or fabulous, or springing out of superstition (as some suppose), has been established in the religious rites but what has partly moral and salutary reasons, partly others not devoid of ingenuity in their bearings upon history and physics. For example, take the *garlic* (for the fable that Dictys, foster father of Isis, fell into the river and was lost as he was laying hold of some garlic is improbable to the last degree), but the priests entertain religious scruples about it and avoid and dislike the garlic, because this is the only plant that naturally grows and flourishes while the moon is on the wane; and it is suitable neither for persons keeping fast, nor holding festival, because it makes the one thirsty, the other to shed tears when they eat thereof. In the same way they



hold the *swine* to be an unholy animal because it seems to copulate most of all when the moon is on the wane, and of those who drink its milk, the bodies break out into leprosies and itchy eruptions; for the legend which they repeat over it, when they sacrifice (once for all) and eat a swine at the new moon, namely, that Typhon was pursuing a swine by the light of the full moon, and so found the wooden coffer, in which lay the body of Osiris and scattered the pieces, is not accepted by all; for they hold this, like many other things, to belong to false traditions. But they say that those of old were so hostile to luxury, extravagance, and delicate living, that they relate there was a column set up in the Temple of Thebes containing a curse engraved thereon against King Mnevis, the first that drew away the Egyptians from their old way of living without voyaging, without money, and of primitive simplicity. It is further said that Technatis, father of Banchoreus, once when marching towards Arabia, when his table-service was behindhand, dined upon what food was procurable and afterwards slept soundly upon a mattress, and thus became enamored of simple fare; and in consequence of this, uttered a curse upon Mnevis, and with the approval of the priests, set up a pillar publishing the anathema.

IX. For the kings used to be elected out of either the sacerdotal or the military class, the latter enjoying dignity and honor on account of valor, the former on account of wisdom; but he that was elected out of the military class immediately became one of the priests, and was initiated into their wisdom, which was for the most part shrouded in fables and stories giving obscure indications and glimpses of the truth, as indeed they themselves half acknowledge by kindly setting up the *Sphinxes* in front of their temples, as though their religious teaching contained wisdom hidden in enigmas. And the shrine of Minerva at Sais (whom they consider the same with Isis) bears this inscription, "I am all that hath been, and is, and shall be; and my veil no mortal has hitherto raised." Furthermore, as most people believe that the proper name of Jupiter amongst the Egyptians is "Ammies" (which we corruptly call "Ammon"). Manetho the Sebennyte is of opinion that the "hidden" and "hiding" is expressed by this word. Hecataeus of Abdera says that the Egyptians use this word to one another, when they are calling anyone to them; for the word is one of calling to, for which reason the Supreme God (whom they consider the same with the *All*) they invoke as being *hidden* and *invisible*, and exhort him to make himself visible and apparent, and therefore call him "Amun": so great therefore was the piety of the Egyptians in their teaching respecting the gods.

X. The wisest of the Greeks bear testimony to this, such as Solon, Thales,

Plato, Eudoxus, Pythagoras (some say Lycurgus also), by their travelling into Egypt and conversing with the priests. Eudoxus, for example, they say, received lessons from Chonupheus of Memphis; Solon, from Sonchis of Sais; Pythagoras from Oenuphis of Heliopolis; and he being probably the most admired of these visitors, and himself admiring the people, copied their symbolical and mysterious style, and wrapped up his doctrines in enigmas; for the most part of the Pythagorean precepts do not fall short of the so-called hieroglyphic writings in obscurity; such, for instance, as, “Not to eat off a chair;” “Not to sit down upon a corn-measure;” “Not to plant a palm-tree;” “Not to stir the fire with a sword in the house.” And I myself think that the fact that the men (of his sect) call the unit “Apollo,” the two “Diana,” the seven, “Minerva,” and “Neptune” the first Cube; is analogous to the things set up upon the temples, and in truth to those done and painted there. For the king and lord, Osiris, they represent by an eye and a *sceptre*, and some even interpret the name as “Many-eyed,” the “os” signifying *many*, and the “iri,” eye, in the Egyptian language: and Heaven, as being exempt from old age by reason of its eternity, by a *heart* with an altar of incense placed below it. And in Thebes there were dedicated statues of Judges wanting the hands: whilst that of the chief-judge had also the eyes closed, showing that Justice is above bribes, and not to be moved by prayer. The Military class had the *beetle* for device on signet, for the beetle is never female, but all are males, and they breed by depositing their seed [in balls of dung]; since they make these balls, not so much to provide material for food, as a place for propagation of their kind.

XI. When therefore you shall hear the fables the Egyptians tell about the gods—their wanderings, cutting to pieces, and many such like mishaps you ought to bear in mind what has been above stated, and not to suppose that any of them happened or was done in the manner related. For they do not really call the *dog* “Hermes,” but the animal’s watchfulness, sleeplessness, and sagacity (for by knowledge and absence of knowledge it distinguishes between friend and foe, as Plato says) make it appropriate to the most sagacious of the gods: neither do they suppose that the sun rises as a new born child out of a lotus, but it is in this way they picture the rising of the sun, enigmatically expressing that the solar fire is derived from *moisture*. For that most savage and terrible King of the Persians, Ochus—who put many to death, and finally butchered Apis and dined upon him along with his friends—they styled “The Sword,” and still call him by that name in the list of kings; that is not actually describing his person, but likening the hardness and wickedness of his disposition to an instrument of slaughter. In the same way must you hear the stories about

the gods, and receive them from such as interpret mythology, in a reverent and philosophic spirit, both performing constantly and observing the established rites of the worship, and believing that no sacrifice nor act is more well pleasing to the gods, than is the holding the true faith with respect to them, so will you escape an evil no less great than Atheism, namely, *Superstition*.

XII. The following myth is related in the briefest terms possible, divested of everything unnecessary and superfluous. They tell that the sun having discovered Rhea secretly copulating with Saturn, laid a curse upon her, that she should not bring forth a child in either month or year: that Hermes being in love with the goddess copulated with her; and afterwards playing at counters with the Moon and winning from her the seventieth part of each one of her lights, out of the whole composed five days, the which he added to the three hundred and sixty, which days now the Egyptians call "additional," and keep as the birthdays of the gods; that on the first of these was born Osiris, and that, a voice issued forth with him in the birth, that "the Lord of all is entering into light." But some relate that a certain Pamyle, when drawing water out of the Temple of Jupiter at Thebes, heard a voice ordering her to proclaim with a loud cry, "A great king, beneficent Osiris, is born," and for this cause she nursed Osiris, when Saturn put him into her hands; and also the festival "Pamyliia," is celebrated in his honor, resembling in character the phallic processions. On the second was born Aroeris, whom some call Apollo, some the elder Horus. On the third Typhon, neither in due time, nor in the right place, but breaking through with a blow, he leaped out through his mother's side. On the fourth was Isis born, in very wet places. On the fifth was Nephthys, the same as the "End," and "Venus," whom some call Victory. They say that Osiris was begotten by the Sun, as also Aroeris, by Hermes Isis, by Saturn Typhon and Nephthys; that Osiris and Isis fell in love with each other and copulated under the cloak of darkness in the womb; some say that in this manner was Aroeris begotten, and therefore is called by Egyptians, the elder Horus, by the Greeks, Apollo.

XIII. That when Osiris reigned over the Egyptians he made them reform their destitute and bestial mode of living, showing them the art of cultivation, and giving them laws, and teaching them how to worship the gods. Afterwards he travelled over the whole earth, civilizing it; far from requiring arms, he tamed mankind through persuasion and reasoning joined with song of all kinds and music which he brought over; wherefore he is held by the Greeks to be the same with Bacchus. That Typhon, during his absence, did not rebel, because Isis was on her guard, and able

to keep watch upon him vigorously; but after Osiris returned Typhon laid a plot against him, having taken seventy and two men into the conspiracy, and having for helper a queen coming out of Ethiopia, whom they call Aso. That she secretly measured the body of Osiris, and made to the size a handsome and highly ornamented coffer which he carried into the banqueting room. And as they were all delighted with its appearance and admired it; Typhon promised in sport that whoever should lie down within it, and should exactly fit, he would make him a present of the chest; and after the others had tried, one by one, and nobody fitted it; then Osiris got in, and laid himself down, thereupon the conspirators running up shut down the lid, and fastened it with spike-nails from the outside, and poured melted lead over them, and so carried it out to the River, and let it go down down the Tanaite branch into the sea: which branch on that account is hateful, and unlucky for Egyptians to name. These things are said to have been done on the 17th day of the month Athor, when the sun is passing through the Scorpion, Osiris then being in the eight and twentieth year of his reign. Some have it that he had *lived*, not *reigned*, such a time.

XIV. The first to discover the mischief were the Pans and Satyrs inhabiting the country round Chemmis and to give intelligence about what had happened, whence the sudden terrors and fears of the multitude are to the present day called “panics.” Isis on the news, sheared off one of her tresses, and put on a mourning robe, whence the city, even to the present day has the name of “Copto” (*I beat the breast*); but others think the name signifies bereavement, from “*coptein*” to “deprive.” As she wandered about everywhere, not knowing what to do, she met no one without speaking to him, nay, even when she fell in with little children, she inquired of them about the coffer; these last chanced to have seen it, and told her the branch of the River through which Typhon’s accomplices had let the chest drift into the sea. From this circumstance the Egyptians believe that little children possess the faculty of prophesy, and that especially the future is fore-shown by their cries when they are playing in the temple courts, and calling out whatever it may be. And having discovered that he (Typhon) had fallen in love and copulated with his sister, in ignorance, as Osiris had done with herself, and seeing the proof thereof in the garland of melilote flower which he had left behind him with Nephthys, she sought for the infant (for she had brought it forth at once, through her fear of Typhon), she found it at last with trouble and difficulty, through dogs guiding her to the place. This infant Isis nursed, and he grew up her guard and minister, being denominated *Anubis*; and said to watch for the gods just as dogs do for men.



XV. Proceeding thence, she learnt by inquiry that the chest had been washed up by the sea at a place called Byblus, and that the surf had gently laid it under an *Erica* tree. This *Erica*, a most lovely plant, growing up very large in a very short time had enfolded, embraced, and concealed the coffer within itself. The king of the place being astonished at the size of the plant, and having cut away the clump that concealed the coffer from sight, set the latter up as a pillar to support his roof. They tell how Isis having learnt all this by the divine breath of fame, came to Byblus, and sitting down by the side of a spring all dejected and weeping spoke not a word to any other persons, but saluted and made friends of the maid servants of the queen, by dressing their hair for them, and infusing into their bodies a wonderful perfume out of herself; when the queen saw her maids again, she fell a longing to see the stranger, whose hair and whose body breathed of ambrosial perfume; and so she was sent for, becoming intimate with the queen, was made nurse of her infant. The king's name they say was Malacander, herself some call Astarte, others Sooses, others Neinanoë, who is the same with the Greek Athenais.

XVI. Isis is said to have suckled the child by putting, instead of her nipple, her finger into his mouth, and by night she singed away the mortal parts of his body. She turned herself into a swallow and flew around the pillar until the queen watched her, and cried out when she saw her child all on fire, and so took away the boy's immortality. Then the goddess, manifesting herself, asked for the pillar of the roof, and having removed it with the greatest ease, she cut away the *Erica* that surrounded it. This plant she wrapped up in a linen cloth, pouring perfume over it, and gave it in charge to the king; and to this day the people of Byblus venerate the wood, which is preserved in the temple of Isis. The coffin she clasped in her arms, and wailed so loud, that the younger of the king's sons died of fright at it, the elder she took with her and putting the coffer on board a ship, put to sea; but when the river Phaedrus sent forth too rough a gale, she grew wrath, and dried up the stream.

XVII. As soon as ever she obtained privacy, and was left by herself, having opened the coffer and laid her face upon the face of the corpse, she wailed and wept; but when the little boy observed this, and came up quietly from behind to spy, she perceived him, and turning round gave him a dreadful look in her rage, the child could not stand the fright, and died. Some say it was not so, but in the manner just stated he tumbled (in his fright) into the sea, but that he receives honors for the sake of the goddess, for the Maneros, whom the Egyptians sing about at their feasts, is this child. Others say that the boy is called Palaestinos, or Pelusios, and

that the city was named after him, having been founded by the goddess. The Maneros that is sung about, they relate, first invented music. But some pretend “Maneros” is not the name of of a person, but an expression suited to people drinking and keeping holiday and signifying “May things of the sort come with good luck,” for that the Egyptians exclaim this, each time, upon the Maneros being uttered; just as, indeed, the exhibition of a dead man in his coffin carried round at feasts is not a reminder of the mourning for Osiris, as some interpret it, but merely intended to warn one to make use of the present and enjoy it, as very soon they themselves shall be as he, which is why they bring it in to the feast.

XVIII. But when Isis had gone to see her son Horus (who was at nurse in the city Buto), and had put the coffer away, Typhon being out a hunting by moonlight came upon it, and recognizing the corpse, tore it into *fourteen* pieces, and scattered them abroad. Isis having heard of this, sought after the fragments, passing over the swamps in a papyrus boat; for which cause such as sail in papyrus boats are never injured by the crocodiles, because they either fear or respect the goddess, from this circumstance there are many places called “Tombs of Osiris” all over Egypt, because she, whenever she came upon a fragment of the body, there celebrated a funeral. Some deny this, but say that she made images and gave them to the several cities, giving them as the actual body, in order that they may receive honors from those sailing past, and that if Typhon should get the better of Horus, when searching for the real tomb he may be baffled, from many being so called and pointed out. Of the members of Osiris the only one Isis was unable to find was the genital member, for it had been thrown at first into the River, and lepidotus, phagrus, and oxyrynchus had fed upon it, which kinds of fish the natives scruple to eat above all others, and that Isis in its stead made a model and consecrated it, namely the *phallus*, in honor whereof the Egyptians hold a festival.

XIX: Afterwards Osiris came from the shades to Horus, and trained and exercised him for war, and then asked him “What he thought the finest thing possible?” and when he replied “to avenge one’s father and mother when ill treated;” he asked him secondly “what he considered the most useful animal to people going to battle?” and when Horus answered, “the horse,” Osiris wondered at it and was puzzled why he said the *horse* instead of the *lion*. But when Horus explained that the lion indeed was serviceable to one standing in need of aid, but the horse can both save him that flees and also destroy the enemy: Osiris on hearing this was rejoiced at the supposition that Horus had provided himself with horses. And as numbers came over from time to time to the side of Horus,

Typhon's concubine, Thucris by name, came also, and a serpent pursuing her was cut to pieces by the friends of Horus; and now in memory of this event, they throw down a *rope* in the midst of all, and chop it to pieces. The battle lasted for many days, and Horus vanquished, but Isis having received from him Typhon in chains, did not destroy, but on the contrary unbound and let him go free. This Horus did not endure with patience, but he laid hands on his mother, and pushed the crown off her head; whereupon Hermes placed a bull's skull upon her instead of helmet. And when Typhon brought a charge of illegitimacy against Horus, Hermes acting as his counsel, Horus was pronounced legitimate by the gods. After this Typhon was beaten in two other battles; and Isis conceived by Osiris copulating with her after death, [Alluding to the incident of the opening of his coffer, and explaining the sad fate of the too inquisitive little boy.] and brought forth the prematurely born, and weak in his lower limbs, Harpocrates.

XX. These are pretty nearly the heads of the legend, the most blasphemous parts being omitted; for example, about the dismemberment of Horus, and the decapitation of Isis, because if these things people believe and say concerning blessed and incorruptible natures (by whose medium the idea of the deity is mainly conceived) as having been really done, and really having happened to them—then, as Aeschylus hath it:—

“We must spit at the tale, and rinse the mouth:”

and there is no more need of talking to you, in fact, you are yourself disgusted at people holding such absurd and uncivilized notions respecting the gods. Are not these things exactly like the fine-spun fables and empty tales that poets and story tellers, like spiders, breed out of themselves, without foundation from first to last, and weave and spread them out? Nevertheless, this history contains certain questions, and descriptions of real events; and in the same way as mathematicians say that the rainbow is the image of the sun, variously colored through the reflection of the image upon the cloud, so the legend before us is a kind of reflection of a history reflecting the true meaning upon other things; as is shown forth by the sacrifices containing a representation of mourning and sadness; as also by the ground plan of the temples, in some parts spreading out into colonnades, and courts open to the sky and lightsome, in others having under ground hidden and dark galleries (like that at Thebes), and halls as well; and above all, by the belief of the Osiris worshippers, where his body is said to be deposited in several places at once. Abydos, perhaps, or the little town Memphis, they say, is celebrated for possessing the only true body: and that at Abydos are buried the rich

and noble of the Egyptians, ambitious to share the burial place of Osiris' body, whilst in Memphis is kept the Apis, the "Image of the soul of Osiris," where his body also is said to lie.

XXI. That city's name also some interpret as "Harbor of good things," others as "Tomb of Osiris;" but the "Nisbitane" placed close to the gates, is universally shunned and unapproachable, not even a bird perches upon it, nor a fish comes up to it; but at a particular season the priests cross over, and offer burnt offerings, and crown the monument which is overshadowed with the shrub called "methides," and exceeding in size any olive tree. But Eudoxus states that though there are many so-called Tombs in Egypt, yet that the true monument was erected at Busiris, for that *that* was the birthplace of Osiris; for the name "Taphosiris" requires no explanation since the name itself means "Tomb of Osiris." I approve of the *chopping of wood*, the *cutting down of flax*, the *pouring out of libation*, inasmuch as the generality of mystic rites are interspersed with these ceremonies, and not only the priests of *this*, but also of the other gods (that is of all that are not unborn and incorruptible) assert that their *bodies* are deposited with them, and are taken care of after their decease, but that their souls shine in heaven as stars; and that of Isis so called by the Greeks the *Dog-star*, but by the Egyptians *Sothis*; that of Horus, *Orion*, that of Typhon, the *Bear*, and towards the keep of the sacred animals, all the rest of Egypt pay an assessment, but the inhabitants of the Thebaid alone refuse to pay, because they do not hold with *mortal* deities; but with them whom they themselves call "Kneph," who is unborn and incorruptible.

XXII. Since many places of the sort are called and shown as divine Tombs, those who suppose them to be in reality those of kings and tyrants (who by reason of their extraordinary merit, or power, had arrogated honors to themselves by the fame of their superhuman nature, and had afterwards shared the common lot), whose terrible or mighty deeds or fates are thus commemorated, such persons find a very easy evasion of the legend, and shift its indecency from the gods upon *men*; and they obtain support from the religious rites. For the Egyptians relate that Hermes had one arm bent so that it could not be straightened, that Typhon was red in complexion, Horus white, and that Osiris was black skinned—just as so many men born in the course of nature. Besides, they call a general "Osiris," and a pilot "Canopus" (after whom the star is named); also that the ship which the Greeks call the Argo, was the representation of the bark of Osiris, made a constellation of in his honor; and it moves along at no great distance from Orion and the Dog-star, of which the Egyptians hold the one to be sacred to Horus, the other to Isis.



XXIII. I am afraid that this is “moving things that ought not to be moved, and making war not only upon antiquity” (as Simonides hath it), but upon many tribes and families of man, possessed with veneration for these particular deities, when people let nothing alone, but transfer these great names from the heavens to the earth, and do their best to eradicate and destroy (or nearly so) the respect and faith implanted in men from their infancy, and opening a wide door to the atheistical sort, [An evident allusion to the Christians.] and also to him that *humanizes* the gods, and giving a splendid opportunity to the deceptions of Evemerus, the Messenian, who, by composing treatises upon his false and unfounded mythology, disseminated atheism all over the world, reducing all deities alike to the names of generals, admirals, and kings, pretended to have flourished in old times; transcribing all this forsooth from the inscriptions in letters of gold set up at Panchon which said inscriptions no foreigner nor Greek, save Evemerus alone, as it seems, has met with, when he made his voyage to the Panchoans and Triphyllans, people that never were, nor are, in any part of the globe.

XXIV. And yet great exploits are sung amongst Assyrians, namely those of Semiramis, and great in Egypt those of Sesostris; the Phrygians even to this day call splendid exploits “Manic,” on account of Manis, one of their ancient kings, having been good and powerful amongst them, whom some also call “Masdes.” [The common title of the Sassanean kings was “Masdesin,” “servant of Ormuzd;” and the same probably was a title of this Mania.] Cyrus led the Persians, Alexander the Macedonians, conquering as they went, to all but the utmost limits of the world; they nevertheless have the name and the memory of good kings (not of gods); and if some few, puffed up with vanity, as Plato says, “with souls inflamed by youth and ignorance,” have out of insolence assumed the style of gods, and the dedication of temples in their honor, yet their glory has flourished but a brief space, and thereafter they incurred the charge of vanity and arrogance, coupled with that of impiety and transgression of law:—

“Raised up like smoke, they quickly fell to earth:”

And now like fugitives that can be arrested, they are dragged out from their temples and altars, they keep nothing but their names and tombs. On which account, Antigonus the Elder, when a certain Hermodatus, in his verses, compared him to the Sun, and styled him a god, replied, “The carrier of my night-stool has not so good an opinion of me”; and with reason did Lysippus, the sculptor, censure Apelles, the painter, because in painting Alexander’s portrait he had put a thunderbolt into his hand, whereas he himself had put a spear, the glory of which no time shall

efface, inasmuch as it is genuine and appropriate.

XXV. Do they, therefore, better, who believe the legends told about Typhon, Osiris, and Isis, not to refer to either gods or men, but to certain *great Powers* (daemons), whom Plato, Pythagoras, Xenocrates, and Chrysippus (following the ancient theologians) assert to have been created far stronger than men, and greatly surpassing our nature in power, but yet having the divine part not entirely unmixed nor unalloyed, but combined with the nature of the soul and the senses of the body, susceptible of pleasure and pain, and all other emotions the result of these, that by their vicissitudes disturb, some in a greater, others in a less degree; for, in that case, as amongst men, so amongst daemons, exist degrees of virtue and of vice. For the deeds of the Giants and Titans, sung of by the Greeks, certain atrocious actions of Saturn, the pitched battle between Python and Apollo, the flight of Bacchus, the wanderings of Ceres do not fall short in absurdity of the legends about Osiris and Typhon, and the others that one may hear told by mythologists to any amount—all the things that are shrouded in mystic ceremonies, and are presented by rites, being kept secret and out of sight from the vulgar, and have a shape similar to those mentioned of the Egyptians.

XXV. We also hear Homer perpetually styling the surpassingly good, “godlike,” and “equal to gods,” and—

. . . “having from gods their sense.”

whereas he applies the epithet derived from daemons indifferently to good and bad:—

“Approach *Daemonian*; wherefore fearest thou so—The Argives?”

And again—

“When like a *daemon* the fourth time he charged:”

“O *daemon-like*! what harm hath Priam done thee,  
Or Priam’s race, that thus thou aye should strive  
The beauteous town of Troy from earth to raze?”

As though the daemons had a *mixed* and *inconsistent* nature and disposition. For which reason Plato attributes to the Olympian gods all things ingenious and extraordinary; but the opposite of these to daemons; and Xenocrates thinks that the unlucky days of the month, and whatever festivals are accompanied with *stripes* and *blows*, *abusive* or *obscene language*, have nothing to do with honoring the gods or good daemons:

but that there are certain Powers of Nature existing in the circumambient air, great and strong indeed, but malignant and ill-tempered, who take delight in such things, and if they obtain them, betake themselves to nothing worse. But the good ones, on the contrary, Hesiod styles “pure daemons,” and “guardians of men”;—

“Givers of wealth; and with such royal power.”

And Plato terms this species “Hermeneutic” and “Daemonean,” a middle class between gods and men, conveying up thither vows and prayers from mankind, and bringing down from thence to earth prophecies and gifts of things good. Empedocles even asserts that daemons suffer punishment for their sins both of commission and omission:—

“Celestial wrath pursues them down to sea;  
Sea spits them out on earth: earth to the rays  
Of Sol unwearied: he to the eddying air  
Sends back the culprits; each receives in turn,  
And all alike reject the hateful crew.”

until having been thus *chastened* and *purified*, they obtain once more their natural place and position.

XXVII. Akin to these and suchlike stories are, they say, the legends told concerning Typhon; how that he committed dreadful crimes out of envy and spite, and by throwing all things into confusion he filled with evils all the land and sea as well, and finally was punished for it. But the avenger of Osiris, his Sister and Wife, who extinguished and put a stop to the madness and fury of Typhon, did not forget the contests and struggles she had gone through, nor yet her own wanderings, nor did she suffer oblivion and silence to envelope her many deeds of wisdom, many feats of courage, but by intermingling with the most sacred ceremonies, images, hints, and representations of her sufferings of yore, she consecrated at one and the same time, both lessons of piety and consolation in suffering for men and women when overtaken by misfortune. And she, together with Osiris, having been translated from the rank of good daemons up to that of gods, by means of their virtue (as later was done with Hercules and Bacchus) receive, not inappropriately, the *united* honors of gods and of daemons everywhere, both in the regions above earth, and in those under ground, possessing the supreme power, for they say that *Serapis* is no other than Pluto, and Isis Proserpine, as Archemoros of Euboea has asserted; as also Heraclitus of Pontas, when he supposes the Oracle at Canopas to belong to Pluto.

XXVIII. Ptolemy Soter beheld in a dream the Colossus of Pluto at Sinope, (though he had not before known nor seen what it was in appearance,) ordering him to bring it as soon as possible to Alexandria; and when he was ignorant and at a loss as to where the statue then stood, and was relating the vision to his friends, there was found a man, a great traveller, by name Sosibius, that declared he had seen at Sinope just such a Colossus as the king had dreamt he saw. He therefore despatched Soteles and Dionysius, who after much time and with difficulty (not, however, without divine aid) *stole* and brought away the statue. And when it was brought and seen, then Timotheus, the interpreter, and Manetho, the Sebennite, and their fellows, *conjecturing* that it was a figure of Pluto (drawing this conclusion from the Cerberus and the Serpent), *made Ptolemy believe* that it is of no other god, but of Serapis, for it did not come bearing such a name from the other place, but *after* it had been brought to Alexandria, it got the name that Pluto bears amongst the Egyptians, namely, *Serapis*. And seeing that Heraclitus, the natural philosopher, asserts that “Hades and Dionysos are the same person, when they are infuriated and rave,” they (the Egyptians) slip unconsciously into the same belief. For such as explain that *Hades* means the *Body*, because the Soul is as it were out of its senses, and drunken, [The doctrine of the Alexandrian Platonists, as is fully set forth by Macrobius in his description of the descent of the Soul.] when confined therein, such people are too far fetched in their interpretation. It is better, therefore, to connect Osiris with Bacchus, and Serapis with Osiris, for the latter obtained this appellation after he had changed his nature, [The name being compounded of *Osiris* and *Apis*, expresses that his soul, after death, had passed unto the sacred bull.] inasmuch as Serapis is common [Probably meaning, universal god, not a mere local Egyptian divinity.] to all, in the same way as such as have partaken of the sacred rites know that Osiris is.

XXIX. For it is not worth while paying any attention to the Phrygian sacred books, wherein it is said that Serapis was the daughter of Hercules, and Typhon, son of Isaicus, son of. . . , nor yet to avoid treating Phylarchus with contempt for saying that Bacchus first brought two oxen out of India to Egypt; the name of one of which was *Apis*, of the other *Osiris*. For Serapis is the name of Him who puts in order the universe (παν), joined to “*sairein*” which some say means “to beautify and arrange.” [This preposterous etymology is evidently that of Phylarchus.] For these remarks of Phylarchus are absurd; yet far more absurd the opinion of such as say Serapis is no god at all, but the coffin of Apis is so called: (they also talk of certain brazen doors at Memphis, named the “Doors of Oblivion and Wailing,” which when they bury Apis utter a deep and harsh sound, for



which reason [we are forbidden] to touch any sounding vessel of brass.) More endurable is the explanation of such as derive it from “stimulating” (σευεσθαι) the motion of the universe. But the most part of the priests say that “Osiris” and “Apis” are united into the same word, for they explain and inform us that we ought to consider the Apis as a beautiful *image* of the soul of Osiris. But for my part, if the name of Serapis is really Egyptian, and I think it signifies Cheerfulness and Rejoicing, founding my conjecture on the fact that the Egyptians call the festival of Rejoicing, “*Sai rei*,” in fact Plato says that Hades [*Ἄδης=Αἰδους υἱος.*] is so named as the “Son of Respectfulness,” and a god benevolent to such as dwell with him; and amongst the Egyptians many other of the names (of gods) are significant words; also that subterraneous place whither they believe the souls go after death, they call “Amenthen,” the name signifying “that which gives and takes.” But whether this be one of the names carried out of Greece in ancient times, and brought back again, we will consider further on; at present it is our business to go through the remaining parts of this belief.

XXX. Osiris and Isis passed from the rank of good daemons to that of deities; but the power of Typhon although dimmed and crushed, and still, as it were, in the last agony and convulsions, they nevertheless propitiate and soothe by means of certain sacrifices: but occasionally they humiliate and insult him at certain festivals, when they abuse red haired men and tumble an ass down a precipice; for example this is done by the people of Memphis, because Typhon was red haired, and like an ass in complexion. The people of Busiris and Lycopolis do not use trumpets at all because they make a sound like the ass: and altogether, they regard the ass as an unclean and daemon-like animal on account of his resemblance to that personage: they make cakes also at the sacrifice of the month Payni and of Phaophi, and print upon them for device an ass tied. And at the sacrifice to the Sun, they enjoin those that worship this god, not to wear upon the person ornaments of gold, [*Hence the Mohammedan rule of taking off all gold ornaments before saying prayers.*] nor to give food to an ass. The Pythagoreans, too, prove that they regard Typhon as a daemoniac Power, for they say in perfect measure that Typhon was born on the fifty-sixth; and again that the (figure) of the *Triangle* belongs to Pluto, Bacchus and Mars; that of the *Tetragon* to Rhea, Venus, Ceres, Vesta, and Juno; that of the *Dodecagon* to Jove; but that of the Fifty-six sided figure to Typhon—as Eudoxus hath related.

XXXI. The Egyptians, believing that Typhon was born with red hair, dedicate to sacrifice the red colored oxen, and make the scrutiny so close that if the beast should have even a single black or white hair, they

consider it unfit for sacrifice; because such beast, offered for sacrifice, is not acceptable to the gods, but the contrary (as is) whatsoever has received the souls of unholy and unjust men, that have migrated into other bodies. For which reason they heap curses on the head of the victim, cut it off, and formerly used to throw it into the River, but nowadays they sell it to foreigners. But the ox intended for sacrifice, those of the priests entitled “Sealers” used to seal: the signet bearing (as Castor relates) an engraving of a man forced down on his knees, with hands twisted round upon his back, having a sword placed against his throat. [Showing that the primitive human victim was commuted thus.] The ass has got the credit of this resemblance [to Typhon] as they think, on account of his stupidity and unruliness, as well as his color; for which reason as they detest Ochus especially of the Persian Kings, as sacrilegious and polluted, they surnamed him “the Ass,” and he replying, “The Ass shall feast upon your Bull,” he slaughtered the Apis, as Dinon tells us. But those who say that Typhon made his flight out of the battle during seven days upon an ass; and after escaping begot Hierosolymus and Judaeus—these are discovered by that very fact to be lugging the Jewish history into the legend.

XXXII. These things, then, afford grounds for the explanations above advanced. Let us start afresh, and consider the most straightforward expositions; that is to say, those who are reputed to treat the subject in a more philosophic manner. These are such as pretend, like the Greeks, that Saturn symbolizes *Time*, Juno the *Air*, the birth of Vulcan, the change of Air into *Fire*; and similarly amongst the Egyptians, that Osiris is the *Nile*, copulating with Isis the *Earth*; Typhon, the *Sea*, into which the Nile flowing vanishes and is dispersed, except as much part as the earth has taken from him and received, and becomes productive thereby. There is, too, a religious lament made over Saturn, and it laments “him that is born in the *left* region, and that dies in the *right*.” For the Egyptians hold that the Eastern parts are the *face* of the World, the Northern its right hand, the Southern its left. The Nile, therefore, flowing from the North, and in the South swallowed up by the sea, is as reasonably said to have his birth in the left hand region, and his death in the right. On which account the priests abominate the sea, and call salt “the foam of Typhon,” and it is one of their prohibitions, “Not to put salt upon the table,” and they do not speak to mariners, nor make use of the sea, and they keep the ox away from the sea, and from this cause principally do they reject fish, and write up “Hate fish.” At any rate, at Sais, in the forecourt of the temple of Minerva, there was sculptured a child, an old man, after this a hawk, next, a fish, and at the end of all, a river-horse, and it signifies symbolically, “O ye that are coming

into life, and ye that are going out of it [The Deity abhors impudence] [Some words are here lost, but their sense appears from the context to have been what I supply in the translation.]. . . for the reason [they put the] old man. . . By the hawk they mean *God*, by the fish, *hatred*, on account of the sea, as has been above stated; by the river horse, *impudence*, for that beast is reported to kill its sire, and copulates forcibly with its dam: and the saying of the Pythagoreans that the sea is Saturn's tears, seed, may seem to imply the impurity and unsociable nature of the same element.

XXXIII. Let these stories then be told by foreigners, since they offer an explanation within everybody's reach; but the more learned among the priests do not only call the Nile, "Osiris," and the sea, "Typhon," but give the name of Osiris generally to every Principle and Power productive of *moisture*; regarding this as the cause of generation and the essence of seed. "Typhon" they call everything *dry, fiery, dessicative*, and *antagonistic to moisture*; for which reason as they believe him to have been red skinned and yellowish in person, they do not very willingly meet, or converse with pleasure with people having such a complexion; on the other hand they fable that Osiris was black-colored because all water blackens earth, clouds, and garments, when mingled therewith; and in young people the presence of moisture renders the hair black, whereas greyness is, as it were, *a growing pale*, that by reason of dessication, comes upon them who are past their prime. The Spring too is flourishing, generative, and agreeable; but Autumn through the deficiency of moisture is both injurious to plants, and pestilential to animals. And the Ox that is kept at Heliopolis, which they call Mnevis (sacred to Osiris, and which some believe to be the sire of the Apis) [The Bull that was kept at Memphis.] is black, and receives secondary honors to those paid to Apis. Besides, Egypt which is of a black soil to the highest degree, as well as the black part of the eye, they call "Chemia," [Is this the long sought for root of "Cameo?" The Nicolo was distinguished by the Romans as "AEgyptila," and compared by them to the eye.] and compare it to a *heart*, for it is hot and moist, and is chiefly enclosed and annexed to the southern parts of the habitable world, in the same manner as the heart is in the left hand parts of man.

XXXIV. The Sun and the Moon they symbolize as using not chariots but boats for vehicles in performing their courses, expressing allegorically their nourishment and origin from moisture: and they think that Homer, like Thales, had learnt from the Egyptians to lay down that Water was the beginning and origin of all things, for that his ocean is Osiris, and his Tethys Isis, as nursing, and helping to breed up all things. For the Greeks

call the emission of seed απουσια, and copulation συνουσια; and υιος from υδωρ and υσαι, and Bacchus they entitle “γυς,” as being lord of the moist principle, he being no other than Osiris, in fact Hellenicus has put down that he heard Osiris called *Ysiris* by the priests; and he persists in so denominating that god, probably on account of his nature, and his invention.

XXXV. That indeed he is the same with Bacchus, who is more fitted to know than yourself, Clea, you who have headed the Bacchanals at Delphi, and have been initiated into the rites of Osiris, ever since your childhood? But if for the sake of other people we must produce testimony, let us put on one side the things not to be revealed; but the ceremonies the priests perform in public when they are conveying the body on a raft, at the burial of the Apis, differ in nothing from the Bacchanalea; for they tie fawn-skins about them, and carry thyrsi, and make shoutings and motions like those possessed with the divine frenzy in honor of Bacchus; for which cause many of the Greeks represent Dionysos in the form of a *Bull* in his images; and the women of the Eleians when praying, exhort the “god with the bull’s foot,” to come to them. The Argives too have a Bacchus by title the “Bull-born;” and they call him up out of water by the sound of trumpets, casting into the deep pool as offerings to the “Pylaochus.” The trumpets they conceal within the thyrsi as Socrates has described it in his treatise on Rituals. The Titanic also and Nycteleian rites are of the same kind with the fabled tearing to pieces of the body of Osiris, his returnings to life, and his new births; and, similarly, the stories about his burials. For the Egyptians, as already stated, show Tombs of Osiris in many places; and the Delphians believe that the relics of Bacchus are deposited with themselves by the side of the Oracle: [\[Another proof of Indian origin, relics of a Buddha being indispensable for the foundation of any \*dagobah\*.\]](#) and their “Holy Ones” offer a secret sacrifice in the Temple of Apollo at what time the Bacchantes waken up “Him of the winnowing fan.” And that the Greeks hold Bacchus for lord and leader not only of the wine but of the whole element of Moisture, Pindar is sufficient testimony where he says, “May Bacchus that rejoiceth greatly in trees and pastures, augment the pure light of Autumn,” for which reason it is forbidden to those that worship Osiris to destroy any cultivated tree, or to stop up any spring of water.

XXXVI. For not the Nile only, but all moisture in general they call the “Issue of Osiris,” and the water vase always leads the procession of the priests in honor of the god, and by the figure of a *fig-leaf* they represent a king, and the Southern quarter of the world; and the fig-leaf is interpreted as the *watering* and *stimulation* of all things, and it is supposed to resemble in its



shape the organ of generation. And when they celebrate (as already stated) the feast of Pamyliia, which is a phallic one, they expose and carry about an image of which the genital member is thrice the natural size; for the god is the Final Cause, and every Final Cause multiplied by generation a function, that which proceeds from itself: and for “often” we are accustomed to say “thrice,” for example “thrice-happy,” and—

“Three times as many chains, without an end.”

Unless perhaps, this triplication of the member was understood by the ancients in its strict sense; inasmuch as the moist Principle being the Final Cause and origin of all things, has produced from the beginning the three first elements, Earth, Air, Fire. For the tale that is tacked on to the myth, how that Typhon threw away the genital member of Osiris into the River, and that Isis could not find it, but deposited and prepared a model of the same, ordaining that people should honor it and carry the phallus about—all this permits us to infer that the generative and seminal power of the god had first for materials *moisture*, and by means of moisture was mixed up with the things fitted by Nature to participate in birth. There is another legend of the Egyptians that Apopis, being brother of the Sun, made war upon Jupiter, and that Jupiter adopted for son Osiris who had assisted him, and had brought the war to an end along with him, and surnamed him Bacchus. Of this legend the fabulous character can be shown to contain a touch of truth as regards natural history. For the Egyptians give the name of Jupiter to the *breath*, [Or wind.] to which everything dry and fiery is antagonistic. This latter element is not the Sun, but has a certain affinity to the Sun; now moisture quenching the excess of dryness, augments and strengthens the exhalations by means of which the wind is nourished and made vigorous.

XXXVII. And, moreover, the Greeks consecrate the ivy to Bacchus, and amongst the Egyptians it is called “Kenosiris,” the name signifying (as they say) the “plant of Osiris”—Ariston, therefore, who wrote the “Colonies of the Athenians,” met with an epistle of Alexarchus (a writer without any knowledge of the subject) in which it is related that Bacchus, being son of Isis, was not called “Osiris” by the Egyptians, but “Arsaphes” (in his First Book), this name signifying *manliness*. Hermaeus, too, declares the same thing in his First Book “Upon the Egyptians,” for he says that “Osiris” interpreted is “weighty.” I pass by Mnaseas who identifies with Epaphus both Bacchus, Osiris, and Serapis; I also pass over Anticlidias, who says that Isis was daughter of Prometheus, and consort of Bacchus—for the above-stated peculiarities in the sacrifices and ceremonies carry with them proof more convincing than any testimony.

XXXVIII. Of the stars, they hold Sirius to be Isis' *Water-carrier*, they honor the Lion, and decorate the gateways of temples with gaping lions' heads, because the Nile swells:—

“When first the Sun doth with the Lion join.”

And as they hold and believe the Nile the issue of Osiris, so do they regard the earth as the body of Isis: not indeed the whole earth but just as much as the Nile inundates, fecundating and mingling with it; for from the union they beget Horus. Horus is that which preserves and nourishes all thing, namely the Seasons and the regulator of the circumambient air; and they tell that he was nursed by Leto in the marshes round Buto, because the watery and thoroughly soaked earth chiefly *nurses* the exhalations that quench and relax the dryness and drought of the air. “Nephthys” they call the remotest parts and boundaries of the land, and those contiguous to the sea; for which reason they style Nephthys the “end,” and say that she is the consort of Typhon. And when the Nile rising beyond the usual height, and growing great, approaches on the opposite side towards the extremities of the country, they call this the copulation of Osiris with Nephthys, which is betrayed by the springing up of plants; amongst which is the melilote, by which flowers having fallen off and been left behind (by Osiris) Typhon made the discovery of the injury done to his bed: from which same copulation Isis indeed conceived Horus legitimately, but Nephthys had Anubis, a bastard. However, in the “Successions of the Kings” they record that Nephthys, being married to Typhon, was at first barren, and if they tell this not of a woman, but of a goddess, they express enigmatically that the entire extent of the country was unproductive, and bore no crops from barrenness.

XXXIX. The conspiracy and tyranny of Typhon means the power of drought getting the better of, and destroying the moisture that both generates and augments the Nile: and his helper, the Queen of the Ethiopians, signifies the south winds from Ethiopia; for when these prevail over the Etesian winds (which drive the clouds towards Ethiopia), and hinder them from dissolving into rains and swelling the Nile, then does Typhon take possession and burn; and at that time he has completely mastered the Nile, which through weakness is contracted and shrunk up within itself; and drives it out, hollow and humble, into the sea: for the shutting up of Osiris in the coffer probably means nothing else than the concealment and disappearance of the water: for which reason they say that Osiris vanished in the month Athyr, at which time, the Etesian winds having entirely ceased, the Nile recedes, and the country is laid bare, and night lengthening, darkness is increased, and the power of light wastes

away and is subdued, and the priests also perform other dismal rites, and cover a gilt ox with a black veil of linen; and so exhibit it in mourning for the goddess (for they consider the ox as the animated image of Osiris) for four consecutive days, beginning with the seventeenth. For the things mourned for are four in number: first, the Nile failing and shrinking; secondly, the Northerly breezes entirely extinguished through the Southerly getting the upper hand; thirdly, the day growing shorter than the night; and in addition to all this, the exposure of the land, coupled with the stripping of the trees, which cast their leaves at that very time. But on the nineteenth at night they go down to the sea, and the “Dressers” and priests bring out the sacred coffer containing a little golden ark, into which they take and pour water from the river, and a shout is raised by the assistants, as though Osiris had been found: next, they knead garden earth with this water, and mingling therewith frankincense and precious spices, they model a little image in the shape of the Moon, and this they robe and decorate, expressing thereby that they hold these deities to be the Principles of Earth and Water.

XL. But when Isis has recovered Osiris, and is making Horus grow, strengthened by means of exhalations clouds and mists, Typhon has been conquered indeed, but not destroyed, because the goddess of the Earth hath not suffered the Principle opposed to moisture to be entirely exterminated, but she lowered and slackened the same, wishing that the mixture might still continue: inasmuch as it was not possible for the world to be complete if the fiery principle failed and were exterminated, and if all this is not told in so many words, yet one may not reasonably regret the story that Typhon of old conquered the party of Osiris. For Egypt was once sea; for which cause many places in the mines and in the mountains are found to contain shells to the present day; and all springs, and wells, whereof there are many, have their water brackish and bitter; as though being a stale remnant of the former sea which had collected there. But in time, Osiris got the better of Typhon; that is a good season of rains having come on the Nile drove off the sea, and brought to light the flat ground, and filled up the same with its alluvial deposits: a thing that has for it the testimony of our senses: for we see even now that through the River’s perpetually bringing down fresh mud, and adding on the land, the deep water gradually recedes, and the sea runs back, in consequence of the bottom rising up through the alluvial deposit: and the Pharos which Homer knew as distant a day’s sail from Egypt, is now a part thereof: not that the island itself has grown larger, or come nearer, but because the sea has retreated through the river’s forming and making the mainland to grow. This however is of the same kind with the theological theories of the Stoics, for

they too say that the generative and nutritive spirit is Bacchus; the impulsive and separative, Hercules; the receptive, Ammon; Ceres and Proserpine, that which pervades the earth and her fruits; and Neptune that pervading the sea.

XLI. But such as mix with these physical doctrines others derived from astrology and the mathematics, think that Typhon signifies the solar world, and Osiris the Lunar: for that the moon having her light of a fertilizing and more watery nature is favorable to the breeding of animals and the growing of plants: but that the sun is ordained with his unmitigated light to heat and parch up things that grow up and flourish, and to render the great part of the earth utterly uninhabitable through his blazing, and also to get the better of the Moon herself. For which reason the Egyptians always call Typhon "Seth," [This has no connection with the Hebrew name, which means "Placed," "Settled."] which signifies *that which tyrannizes*, and which *forcibly constrains*, and they fable that Hercules resides in the Sun, and travels about with him, but Hermes does the same with the Moon; for the effects of the Moon resemble the actions of reason, and those dictated by wisdom; whereas those of the Sun are like strokes brought to pass through violence and force, and the Stoics say that the Sun is set on fire, and derives his nutriment from the sea, whereas to the Moon the fountain and lacustrine waters send up a sweet and gentle exhalation.

XLII. On the seventeenth day of the month took place, as the Egyptians fable, the death of Osiris, on which day the full Moon being completed becomes most conspicuous: on which account the Pythagoreans call that day "Antiphraxis," (*precaution*); and generally abominate that particular number, for sixteen being a square number and eighteen having sides of unequal length which alone of the integral numbers have the peculiarity of possessing external measurements equal to the areas contained by them,\* the seventeen intruding hedges off and disjoins them from one another, and distracts the proportion of one to eight, because it is itself cut up into unequal parts. The number of years that some say Osiris lived, others that he reigned, was eight-and-twenty: for just so many are the lights of the moon, and for so many days doth she revolve about her circle. By the wood they cut down at the so-called burials of Osiris, and construct therewith a crescent-shaped coffer, they signify that the Moon when she approaches the Sun, becomes crescent-shaped and hides herself: and the tearing up of Osiris into fourteen parts they interpret of the days during which the luminary wanes after full moon, until the new moon, and the day when she first appears after escaping the brightness of, and passing by the Sun, they style "Imperfect Good"; for Osiris is a doer of good, and his



name signifies many things, but especially, as they say, “the power that is active and beneficial”; and the other name of Osiris, namely, “Ompis” means, according to Hermaeus, by interpretation “Benefactor.”

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\* ετερομηκης is applied to Eighteen, because it may be represented by a parallelogram of which the sides are 6 and 6, 3 and 3, alternately: two of these multiplied give the area of the figure, which also is Eighteen—the same comparison of numbers to mathematical figures Plato uses in the beginning of the Theaetetus.

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XLIII. For they are of opinion that to the lights of the Moon the risings of the Nile bear a certain analogy: for the greatest rising, that about Elephantine, is of eight-and-twenty cubits, the same in number as the lights and measures of her monthly revolutions, the lowest, around Mendes and Xoïs, is of six cubits, analogous to her half-quartering; and the mean, that round Memphis, when it is of the regular height, is fourteen cubits, corresponding to the full moon. Apis, they say, is the animated image of Osiris, and he is conceived when a generative light falls strongly from the Moon, and touches a cow that is in heat; for which cause many of the decorations of Apis resemble the appearances of the Moon; for he blackens over his shining parts with dusky robes, because it is on the new moon of the month Phamenath that they hold the festival, called by them “the Entrance of Osiris into the Moon”; being the commencement of spring. Thus they place the power of Osiris within the Moon, and say that Isis, being cause of his birth is also his consort. On this account they call the Moon the Mother of Saturn, and hold that she is of hermaphrodite nature, for she is filled and impregnated by the Sun, and again she emits and disseminates in the air generative principles: for that she doth not always express the mischief wrought by Typhon; but being after conquered by the birth, and bound thereby, she nevertheless emerges again and fights her way through to Horus: this latter is the universe surrounding the earth, which is not entirely exempt either from generation or destruction.

XLIV. Some make an allegory out of the rule of the eclipses, for the Moon is eclipsed at her full, when the Sun holds the station opposite to her when she falls into the shadow of the earth, in the same way as they tell Osiris did into the coffer; and she herself, upon the thirtieth conceals and puts out of sight, yet does not altogether destroy, the Sun, as neither did Isis Typhon. And when Nephthys conceives Anubis, Isis adopts him, for Nephthys signifies what is under the earth and invisible; Isis, what is above ground and visible; and the circle touching these, called the *Horizon*, and

common to both, has been named Anubis, and is figured as a dog; for the dog has the use of his sight both by night and by day; and Anubis appears to have the same office with the Egyptians that Hermes has with the Greeks, being both infernal and celestial. Some, however, think that Anubis signifies *Time*, wherefore as he brings forth all things *out* of himself, and conceives all things *within* himself, he gets the title of Dog. Besides, the votaries of Anubis celebrate a certain mystery, [A passage is lost here, containing a description of this rite, in which it is evident a dog played the principal part.] and in old times the dog enjoyed the highest honors in Egypt. But when Cambyses had slain the apis and cast him out, nothing approached, or tasted of the carcass, except the dog, so he lost his place of the first, and the most honored of all the other animals. And there are some that think he is the shadow of the earth into which the Moon passes when she is eclipsed, and they call him Typhon.

XLV. From all which, it is not unreasonable to conclude that no one singly says what is right, and that all collectively do so; for it is neither *drought*, nor *wind*, nor the *sea*, nor *darkness*, but generally every hurtful and mischievous part that earth contains, which belongs to Typhon. For we must not place the principles of the all in lifeless bodies, as do Democritus and Epicurus: nor yet assume as modeller of uncreated matter, one Reason and one Providence, like the Stoics, that prevails over and subdues all things: for it is impossible that anything at all, whether bad or good, should exist, where God is cause of nothing. For the harmony of the universe is reciprocal, like that of a lyre or bow, according to Heraclitus, and according to Euripides:—

“Evil and good cannot occur apart;  
There is a mixture to make all go well.”

Consequently this is a most ancient notion, that comes down from theologians and lawgivers to poets and philosophers, which has its origin unattributed, but the belief therein strong and not to be effaced, not consisting in words and reports, but in ceremonies and sacrifices, of Barbarians and Greeks alike, and diffused in many places, that neither is the Universe without mind, without reason, and without guidance, and tossed about at random, nor yet is there One Reason that rules and directs all things as it were, by a rudder and by guiding reins, [The Epicurean and Stoic theories of the government of the universe, as opposed to the Neo-Platonic.] but that there are many such directors, and made up out of good and bad; or rather, to speak generally, inasmuch as Nature produces nothing unmixed here below, it is not one Dispenser that like a retail dealer mixes together things for us out of two vessels and distributes the same,

[Alluding to the Homeric picture of Jove, and his two vases of good and evil.] but it is from *two opposite Principles and two antagonistic Powers*; the one guiding us to the right hand and along the straight road, the other upsetting and rebuffing us, that Life becomes of a mixed nature; and also the Universe (if not the whole, yet that which surrounds Earth, and lies below the Moon), is made inconsistent with itself, and variable and susceptible of frequent changes. For if nothing can happen without cause, and good cannot furnish cause for evil, it follows that the nature of Evil, as of Good, must have an origin and principle of its own.

XLVI. And this is the opinion of most men, and those the wisest, for they believe, some that there are Two Gods, as it were of opposite trades—one the creator of good, the other of bad things; others call the better one “God,” the other “Daemon,” as did Zoroaster the Magian, who, they record, lived 5,000 years before the Trojan War. He therefore calls the former “Oromazes,” the latter “Arimanios;” and furthermore explains that of all the objects of sense, the one most resembles *Light*, the other *Darkness*, and *Ignorance*; and that Mithras is between the two, for which reason the Persians call Mithras the “Mediator,” and he [Zoroaster] taught them to offer sacrifice of vows and thanksgiving to the one, of deprecation and mourning to the other. For they bruise a certain herb called “omoine” in a mortar and invoke Hades and Darkness, and mixing it with the blood of a wolf they have sacrificed, they carry away and throw it into a place where the Sun never comes, for of plants they believe some to belong to the good God, others to the evil Daemon; and similarly of animals, dogs, birds, and land hedgehogs belong to the Good, but to the Bad One water rats, for which reason they hold happy men that have killed the greatest number of such things.

XLVII. They too, nevertheless, tell many fabulous stories concerning their gods—for example, the following: that Oromazes sprang out of the purest Light, but Arimanios out of Darkness; they wage war upon each other. Oromazes created six gods, the first of Goodwill, the second of Truth, the third of Order, of the rest one of Wisdom, one of Wealth, one of Pleasure in things beautiful. [The same notion is expressed in the Jewish Sephiroth.] The other God created, as it were, opponents to these deities, equal in number. Then Oromazes, having augmented himself threefold, severed from the Sun as much space as the Sun is distant from Earth, and adorned the heavens with stars; and one star he appointed before all for guard and look out, namely Sirius. And having created four-and-twenty other gods, he shut them up in an egg; but those made by Arimanios, being as many as they, pierced the egg that had been laid, and so the bad things were mixed

up with the good. But a time appointed by fate is coming, in which Arimanios having brought on famine and pestilence must needs be destroyed by the same and utterly vanish; when the earth becoming plain and level there shall be one life and one government of men, all happy and of one language. Theopompus says that, according to the Magi, one of the Gods shall conquer, the other be conquered, alternately for 3,000 years; for another 3,000 years they shall fight, war, and undo one the works of the other; but in the end Hades shall fail, and men shall be happy, neither requiring food nor constructing shelter: whilst the God who hath contrived all this is quiet and resting himself for a time, for that God may well slumber, but not long, like as a man reposing for a moderate space. The religious system of the Magi is of the aforesaid character.

XLVIII. The Chaldeans hold that the gods belong to the planets, of whom two they call “doers of good,” two “makers of evil;” the other three they describe as intermediate and neutral. But the notions of the Greeks are, I suppose, plain enough to every one, for they make the good part that of the Olympian Jove, that of the hostile deity they give to Hades; and they fable that *Harmony* was the child of Venus and Mars, of whom the one is cruel and quarrelsome, the other gentle, and presiding over birth. Consider too the philosophers that side with them, for Heraclitus directly calls Mars, father, lord, and ruler of all things; and says that Homer, when he prays that

“Perish Contention, both from gods and men,”

forgets that he is cursing the origin of all things, inasmuch as they derive their origin from contention and antipathy, and the Sun will not overpass his appointed limits, otherwise:

“The avenging tongue of Law would find him out,”

and Empedocles calls the Beneficent Principle “Love” and “Friendship,” and frequently too, Harmony, “with glowing face,” but the Evil Principle he styles

“Contentiousness accurst, and blood-stained War.”

Now the Pythagoreans characterize these Principles by several names: the Good One, as the “One,” the “Definite,” the “Abiding,” the “Straight,” the “Exceeding,” the “Square,” the “Equal,” the “Right-handed,” the “Bright;” the Bad One as the “Two,” the “Indefinite,” the “Unstable,” the “Crooked,” the “Sufficient,” the “Unequally-sided” (parallelogram), the “Unequal,” the “Left-handed,” the “Dark”—inasmuch as these are supposed the final causes of existence—Anaxagoras defines them as



“Mind,” and the “Infinite;” Aristotle, the one as “Form,” the other as “Deprival.” Plato, as it were mystifying and veiling the matter, denominates in many places one of the opposing Principles as “The Same;” the second, as “The Other;” but in his “Laws,” being now grown older, he no longer speaks in riddles and symbolically, but names them directly. “Not by one soul,” says he, “was the universe set in motion, but by several, perhaps, at all events, by not less than *Two*; whereof the one is beneficent, the other antagonistic to this, and the creator of opposite effects: and there is room for a *Third Principle* to exist, one intermediate between the Two, which is neither destitute of soul, nor of reason, nor of impulse from within (as some suppose), but subordinate to those Two Principles, ever seeking after the Better One, and desiring and following after it,” as the part of the treatise which follows will show, for he adopts into this system chiefly the religious notions of the Egyptians.

XLIX. For the origin and constitution of this world are mixed, being formed out of opposite principles—not, however, of equal force with each other, but the superiority belonging to the Better One. But it is impossible that the Bad One should be entirely destroyed, as it is largely implanted in the body, largely in the soul of the all, and always contending against the Better One. Now in the soul, *Mind*, and *Reason*, the best masters and guides, are *Osiris*; but in Earth and Water, Winds and Stars, that which is ordered, permanent, and healthy, in seasons, temperament, and revolutions, are the issue of *Osiris*, and the *image* of him made visible. But Typhon is the part of the soul that is subject to the passions, Titan-like, unreasonable, and impulsive; but of the body (he is) the part that is unsound, subject to disease, and liable to disturbance by bad seasons and inclement weather, by the concealments of the Sun, and the disappearances of the Moon—such as deviations from its course, vanishings, and whirlwinds. And the name “Seth,” by which they call Typhon, proves this; for it signifies “That which tyrannizes and constrains by force,” it likewise signifies a “return,” and again an “overleaping.” Bebaeon, again, some say, was one of the companions of Typhon, whilst Manethos asserts that Typhon was called “Bebon,” and that the name signifies a “holding back,” and “hindrance,”—implying that the power of Typhon stands in the way of things going on regularly and towards their proper end.

L. For which reason, they give him for attribute the most stupid of all tame animals, namely, the *ass*; and of the wild, the most savage, namely, the *crocodile* and the *hippopotamus*. With respect to the ass we have already explained the meaning, but at Hermopolis they show as a figure of Typhon

a hippopotamus, upon which stands a hawk fighting with a serpent; by the hippopotamus signifying Typhon, by the hawk *power* and virtue, [or *sovereignty*,] which Typhon frequently gains by force, and never ceases to be disturbed by his own wickedness, and to disturb others; for which cause when they sacrifice on the 7th of the month Sybi (which they call “The Coming of Isis out of Phoenicia”) they stamp upon the consecrated cakes the figure of a hippopotamus bound. In the city Apollinopolis, it is the custom that every one must by all means eat a bit of crocodile [once a year]. And on one day they catch and kill as many crocodiles as they can, and lay them out in front of the temple, saying that Typhon ran away from Horus changing himself into a crocodile,—thus making out all animals, plants, and feelings, that are noxious and bad, to be the productive parts and instigations of Typhon.

LI. Osiris, on the contrary, they represent by an *eye* and a *sceptre*, whereof the one signifies *foresight*, the other *power*; in the same way as Homer by calling Jupiter, who governs and reigns over all, by the titles “Supreme” and “Knowing,” probably indicates by the “Supreme” his *power*, by the “Knowing” his *good counsel* and *intelligence*. They frequently represent this god by the figure of a hawk, for that bird excels all in acuteness of sight and swiftness of flying; and by nature digests its food most rapidly of all. The bird is also said, when corpses are lying about unburied, to hover over them, and drop earth upon their eyes. And when in order to drink it descends upon the river, it sets its wings upright, and having drank bends them back again; by which it is evident that it protects itself, and escapes from the crocodile, for if it should be swallowed up, the wing remains as it stood, fixed upright. [In the crocodile’s gullet, and so prevents his gulping down the bird.] In many places also, they exhibit a statue of Osiris in the human shape, erecting the genitals, on account of his generative and nutritive character, whilst the flame-colored robe investing his images, is [put] because they regard the Sun as the *body* of the Good Principle, the *visible* form of the *Intelligible* Being. Hence we ought to pay no attention to such as assign to Typhon the sphere of the Sun—he that has nothing bright, nor salutary, neither order, nor power of generating, nor motion regulated by measure and reason; but all the opposite qualities belong to him. For drought which destroys many things, both of animals and vegetables, must not be put down as the effect of the Sun, but of the winds and waters in earth and air not being seasonably mingled together, when the Principle of disorderly and unregulated force has got loose and has extinguished the exhalations.

LII. In the sacred hymns to Osiris they invoke “Him that is carried within the

arms of the Sun,” and on the 30th day of the month Emphi they celebrate “the Birthday of the Eyes of Horus,” when the Sun and the Moon are come into one straight line, inasmuch as they consider not the Moon alone, but the Sun also as the eye and the light of Horus. And on the 8th day from the end of the month Phaophi they celebrate that of “The Sun’s walking-stick,” after the autumnal equinox, signifying that he requires as it were a support, and strengthening, as he grows weak both in heat and light, and moves away from us, bending down, and crooked. And again upon the eve of the winter solstice they carry the Cow seven times around the temple; and this circular procession is named the “Seeking for Osiris,” as though the goddess were longing for the winter rays from the Sun; and they walk round so many times, because he completes his journey from the winter solstice to the summer solstice in the *seventh* month. And on the 4th day from the beginning of the month it is said that Horus, son of Isis, was the first that offered sacrifice, as it is written in what are entitled “The Birthdays of Horus,” and in fact they on each day burn incense to the Sun of three different sorts, namely, resin at his rising, myrrh at noontide, that which is called “kyphi,” at his setting, of which the signification that each bears I will explain further on; and by means of all these they believe they propitiate and worship the Sun. And what need is there to bring together many things to the same effect? There are some that assert point-blank that Osiris is the Sun, and is named Sirius by the Greeks (for amongst the Egyptians the prefixing of the article has caused the name to be mistaken [The Greeks mistaking οσπίς for ο Σειριος. “Egyptians” in text must be a slip of the scribe.]), and make out Isis to be no other than the Moon; and one particular of her images, those figured with horns, are (say they) imitations of the crescent; whilst by those covered with black they interpret her wanings, and envelopment in darkness, during which she longs for, and follows after the Sun: for which reason they invoke the Moon for aid in *love affairs*; and Isis, says Eudoxus, presides over amours. These stories, indeed, have a certain share of plausibility, but as for those that make out Typhon to be the Sun, these are not even to be listened to. Let us, however, now resume our proper theme.

LIII. For Isis is the *Female Principle of Nature*, and that which is capable of receiving all generation, in virtue of which she is styled by Plato, “Nurse,” and “All-receiving,” but by the generality, “The one of numberless names;” because she is converted by the *Logos* (Reason) into, and receives, all appearances and forms. But she has, implanted in her nature, the love for the First and Supreme of all, the which is identical with the Good, and this she longs after and continually pursues: whereas the part that belongs to the Bad One she flees from and repels, though she is the

*field* and *material* for them both; of herself always inclining towards the Better One, and permitting it to generate and discharge into herself emissions and likenesses, wherewith she rejoices and is glad to be impregnated, and to be filled with births—for birth is an image of existence in Matter, and that which is *born* is a copy of that which *is*.

LIV. From all this, they do not absurdly to fable that the soul of Osiris is eternal and incorruptible, but that his body Typhon did tear to pieces and put out of sight; and Isis wandered about, sought for it, and joined it together again; for that which is, the Intelligible and the Good, is above all change or corruption, but the Sensible and Corporeal models certain images after His likeness, and borrows certain rational principles, forms, and resemblances, which, like seal-impressions in wax, do not last for ever, but the disorderly and turbulent Principle, driven down hither from above, seizes upon them—that Principle which is at war with the Horus whom Isis bore, who is the Sensible image of the Intelligible World. For this reason he (Horus) is related to have had a charge of illegitimacy brought against him by Typhon, because he is not pure and without alloy like his father the Word (Reason), (who exists by himself free from admixture and from passion), but is bastardized by Matter, on account of his bodily part. Nevertheless he gains his cause through Hermes, that is the Word (Reason), bearing witness and proving how that Nature changing her from after the model of the Intelligible, produces the World. For the birth of Apollo that came to pass between Isis and Osiris, whilst the (twin) gods as yet lay within the womb of Rhea, darkly expresses that this world first became visible, and that Matter, being proved to be incomplete in itself, was *perfected* by the Word (Reason), and thus produced the first birth. On which account they tell that this god was *lame* and lying in *darkness*, and they name him the “Elder Horus;” for the world did not exist, but an image as it were, a spectre of the world that was to be.

LV. Now this Horus is well-defined, and complete, he has not destroyed Typhon utterly, but stripped him of his activity and strength: for which reason they say the statue of Horus at Coptos grasps in his one hand the genitals of Typhon, and they fable that Hermes cut out the sinews of Typhon, and used them for lyre strings, thereby meaning that the Word brought the all into harmony, made it concordant out of discordant parts, and did not destroy its destructive principle, but merely ham-strung it. Hence, this principle is weak and inoperative here below, mingling itself and clinging close to such members as are subject to corruption and to change, it is the creator of earthquakes and tremors in the ground, of droughts in the air, and strange blasts; and, again, of whirlwinds and



lightnings, and it infects waters and winds with pestilences, and rears up and tosses itself as far as the Moon, oftentimes checking and darkening her lustre, as the Egyptians believe. And they tell that Typhon at one time hit Horus; at another struck out his eye and swallowed it up, and then gave it back to the Sun; signifying by *blow* the monthly waning of the Moon, by *blinding*, her eclipse, which the Sun remedies, when he again reflects himself upon her, after she has passed through the shadow of the earth.

LVI. Now the better and more divine Nature is made up of *Three*—the Intelligible, Matter, and that formed out of these two, which the Greeks denominate *World*. Plato calls the Intelligible “Idea,” “Model,” “Father,” and Matter he terms “Mother,” “Nurse,” the seat and receptacle of generation; and that which results from both he is accustomed to denominate “Issue,” and “Birth,” and we may conjecture that the Egyptians [reverence] the most beautiful kind of triangle, [The right-angled.] because they liken it to the nature of the universe, and Plato seems to employ this figure in his “Republic,” when drawing up his Marriage scheme. The triangle, too, has this property—*three* the right angle, and *four* the base, and *five* the hypotenuse, being of equal value with the lines containing it. We must therefore compare the line forming the right angle to the *male*, the base to the *female*, the hypotenuse to the *child* of the two; and the one to be Osiris, as the Final Cause; the other, Isis as the recipient; the third, Horus as the result; for as to the *Three*, the first, it is uneven and perfect; for the *Four*, a square with a perfect side, is the produce of the *Two*: as for the *Five*, it partly resembles the father, partly the mother, being made up of the three and the two; also the All derives its name from the Five (παντα, πεντε) and to reckon is called “counting by fives,” for the number Five produces when squared the same number as that of the letters of the Egyptian alphabet, and also the number of years that Apis lived. Horus they are accustomed to style “Kaimis,” that is “He that is seen,” for the world is an object of sense, and visible to the eye; and Isis is sometimes styled “Mouth,” sometimes “Athyri” and “Methyer;” by the first of these names they signify “Mother,” by the second “The worldly house of Horus” (in the same way as Plato has the “Seat” and “Receptacle of generation”); the third title is a compound from “full” and “cause,” because Matter is *full* of the world; and is made up of that which is good, pure, and well arranged.

LVII. Hesiod too may be thought, when he makes the first elements of Creation to be Chaos, Earth, Tartarus, Love, to assume no other first Principles than those aforesaid. Let us therefore distribute his names and assign them thus: to Isis that of *Earth*, to Osiris that of *Love*, to Typhon

that of *Tartarus*, for his Chaos seems to imply a certain *place* or *basis* for the Universe; and the case, somehow or other, recalls that fable of Plato's which Socrates has related in the "Symposean" concerning the birth of Love, how that Poverty, being desirous of having children, laid herself down by the side of Wealth as he was asleep, and, conceiving by him, brought forth Love, who is small and of every shape, inasmuch as he is the offspring of a father that is good, wise, and competent for all things, but of a mother that cannot help herself, destitute, and through her need is always attaching herself to someone else and suing to someone else. For his "Wealth" is no other than the Primal Lover, Projector, Finisher, and All-sufficient; and by "Poverty" he means Matter, which is by itself in need of the Good One, is impregnated by him, is ever craving and ever receiving, whilst he that springs from the two (the *World*, or *Horus*), is neither eternal, nor free from passions, nor incorruptible, yet being ever re-born, contrives by means of the changes and revolutions of the passions to continue always young and never to be destroyed.

LVIII. For we must make use of myths, not entirely as [real] histories, but taking out of them that which is to the purpose, and is in the form of a similitude. When, therefore, we speak of *Matter*, we must not borrow our notions from certain philosophers, and think of it as a body without soul, uncreative, idle, and inactive of itself, for we call oil the *material* of perfume, and gold of an ornament, though they are not devoid of every quality by themselves: and the soul itself and intellect of man we hand over to Reason to beautify and to regulate, as being the *material* of knowledge and virtue: and the mind some have made out to be the region of Ideas, and a thing modelled after the Intelligible world: and some are of opinion that the seed of generation is not a power nor final cause, but only the *material* and *instrument* of generation. These [theorists] we ought to follow, and conceive this goddess as having part in the Primal God, and ever joined with him out of love for the goodness and beauty that surround him, yet is never satiated; but like as we say that a man who is obedient to law and what is just, is *enamored* of justice, and a virtuous woman that has a husband and lives with him, always *desires* him, so we must conceive this goddess as always craving after the Good One, though she be ever in his presence, and is ever being filled with the most powerful and purest influences.

LIX. But where Typhon intrudes, laying hold of the extremities, in this case, where she appears to be of sad countenance, and is said to mourn and be seeking after certain scattered members of Osiris, and to robe the same, [she is] receiving into her lap and concealing the things that were

destroyed, in the same way as she again brings to light the things that are born, and sends them forth out of herself. For the things that be in the heavens and the stars, the reasons, forms, and emissions of the God are unchangeable, whereas those disseminated through the things subject to passion, namely, in earth, sea, vegetables, animals, are interchangeable, perishable, and *buried*: and again afterwards come to light once more, and are made visible by their births: for which reason the fable tells that Nephthys was the wife of Typhon, but that Osiris lay with her by stealth; because the extreme parts of Matter (which parts they denominate “Nephthys” and “End”) are chiefly possessed by the destructive Power, whereas the generative and life-giving Principle distributes amongst them but a weak and dull seed, and which is destroyed by Typhon, except what little Isis takes up and saves and nourishes, and unites together, for on the whole this world *is more good than bad*, as Plato suspected, as well as Aristotle.

LX. For the generative and conservative Principle of Nature is set in motion against him (Typhon) for the purpose of *Being*, whilst the determinating and corrupting part is moved by him for the purpose of *not being*. Hence they name the former Isis, from its being “sent out” (ἰεσθαί), and travelling, with knowledge, as being a “motion endued with soul,” and intelligence, since her Name is not a foreign word; for just as all gods have a common designation derived from “Visible” and “Running” (θεοί from θεατός and θεεῖν), so this goddess do we call Isis, and the Egyptians also Isis, from the word signifying “knowledge” and “Motion” at the same time. And thus Plato says that the ancients signified “Holy One” (οσια) by calling her “Isia,” and similarly “Intelligence” and “Perception,” as being a *current* and *movement* impulse of the mind that longs for an object and is carried onwards; and that they placed understanding (το συνιέναι) and, generally, goodness and virtue in the things that *flow* and that *run*; as on the other hand that thing is reviled by the opposite names, the which, according to its nature, is an impediment, binds down, holds back, and hinders from *rushing after* and *going*, for we denominate it “badness,” “inability,” “cowardice,” “pain.”

LXI. Now “Osiris” has got his name compounded out of the words ἰσῖος and ἔπος: for he is the common *Word* (Reason) of the things in heaven, and of those in hell, of which the former the ancients were wont to term ἱερα, the latter οσια. And he that reveals the things of heaven, the WORD of those that move above, is named “Anubis,” sometimes “Hermanubis,” [The deity, so frequent on Gnostic talismans, bearing the caduceus of Hermes, and accompanied with the Cock.] the former as belonging to

those above, the latter as belonging to those below; for which reason people sacrifice to the one a *white* cock, to the other a *saffron-colored* [To typify infernal flames.] one; for they believe the former character of the god to be unmixed and public, the latter composite and multifarious. You must not be surprised at this derivation of names from the Greek, for there are an infinite number of other words that went into exile along with those that emigrated [Alluding to the old tradition about Danaus, &c.] from Greece, but remain in use and sojourn as foreigners amongst other nations; for adopting some of which certain people censure poetry as talking barbarously; those writers, [critics] I mean, who term things of the kind “dialects” (γλωσσαι). And in what are named “the Books of Hermes,” they relate that it is written concerning the Sacred Names, that the Power appointed to preside over the circuit of the Sun, Horus, the Greeks call Apollo; and that which presides over the Wind some call Osiris, some Sarapis, others Sothi, in the Egyptian language. The last word signifies “pregnancy,” and “to conceive ;” hence, through a corruption of the word, the star is called the Dog [κυων, as if from κυειν: these derivations cannot be preserved in translation.] in Greek, which they consider an attribute of Isis. But we ought by no means to dispute about *names*, not but that we might have reclaimed from the Egyptians their name of “Sarapis” rather than that of Osiris, the former being a foreign and the latter a Greek word; but we hold them both as belonging to one God and to one Power.

LXII. The Egyptian usage is cognate to the aforesaid, for they often designate Isis by the name of *Athene*, which expresses the same meaning, “I have proceeded out of myself,” and is expressive of self-communicated motion. But Typhon, as above stated, is called *Seth*, *Bebon*, and *Syn*—these names being meant to declare a certain forcible and impeding check, opposition, and turning upside down. Besides, they call a loadstone “Bone of Osiris,” but iron “of Typhon” (as Manetho relates), for just as the iron is often, like something alive, attracted to and following after the loadstone, but often turns away and is repelled from it in the opposite direction, in like manner the salutary good and rational motion of the world often attracts by persuasion, draws to itself, and renders more gentle that harsh and Typhonian force; and again, when it has been driven back into itself, it upsets the latter, and plunges it once more into helplessness. Besides, with respect to Jupiter, Eudoxus relates that the Egyptians have a legend that in consequence of his legs having grown into one, he was unable to walk, and out of shame remained in solitude, but that Isis, having cut asunder and separated these parts of his body, rendered his walking powers sound footed. Through these things also does Fable hint, that the Mind and Word of God, which had walked in the



Invisible and the Hidden, came out into Knowledge by means of Motion.

LXIII. The *Sistrum* too shows that the things that *are* must be *shaken*, and never *cease from motion*, but be as it were aroused and stirred up when they slumber and are slothful, for they pretend they drive off and repulse [Hence the idea of driving away the Devil by the sound of bells.] Typhon with the sistra, showing that when Corruption has tied fast and brought it to a standstill, Generation again unlooses and restores Nature by means of Motion. And as the sistrum is circular in the upper part, the arch contains the four things that are shaken, because the part of the universe that is born and perishes, is surrounded by the Lunar sphere, but all things are set in motion and changed within it by means of the four elements, Fire, Earth, Water, Air. And on the arch of the sistrum, at the top, they figure a Cat having a human face [sphinx], and on the lower part, below the things that are shaken, sometimes a head of Isis, sometimes of Nephthys, symbolizing by these heads *Generation* and *End* (for these are the Changes and Motions of the elements), and by the Cat, the Moon, on account of the pied color, [Showing the original color of the Cat to be tabby.] nocturnal habits, and fecundity of the animal, for it is said to bring forth one, and then two, then three, then four, up to five at a birth, and always adds by one up to seven [to her litter], so that in all it produces eight-and-twenty young, the which are equal in number to the illuminations of the Moon. This, however, may be somewhat fabulous, but the pupils in its eyes appear to grow full and dilate themselves at the full of the moon, but become thin and dull during the wane of that luminary; and by the human head of the Cat they express the *intelligence* and *rationality* of the changes connected with the Moon.

LXIV. And to speak comprehensively, neither Water, nor Sun, nor Earth, nor Rain, is it correct to regard as Osiris or Isis; nor on the other hand, Drought, or Sea, or Fire, as Typhon; but simply whatever in these elements is either excessive or disordered in its changes, or deficiencies, to assign this to Typhon: whilst all that is well-ordered, good, and beneficial, we must regard as the *work* indeed of Isis, but as the *image*, *imitation*, and *Reason* of Osiris. If so we worship and honor them, we shall not go wrong. Nay more, we shall make Eudoxus cease from disbelieving, and being perplexed, wherefore the superintendence of love-affairs is not given to Ceres, but to Isis; and why Bacchus is not empowered to *raise* the Nile or to rule over the Shades;—for by one common rule we hold that these two deities are ordained to preside over the whole empire of the Good; and that all whatever exists in Nature beautiful and good, exists through their means; the one supplying the final

causes, the other receiving them, and continuing permanent.

LXV. In this way we shall also meet those common and trivial stories of people whether to identify the legends concerning these deities with the seasonable changes of the atmosphere, or with the growth, sowings, and ploughings of the grain; and who say that Osiris is then buried when the sown grain is hidden in the ground, and that he comes to life and shows himself again when there is a beginning of sprouting; wherefore Isis perceiving that she is pregnant, ties an *amulet round her* neck on the 6th of the first quarter of the month Phaophi, and that Harpocrates is born about the winter solstice, unfinished and infant-like in the plants that flower early and spring up early, for which reason they offer to him first fruits of growing lentiles, and they celebrate her being brought to bed after the vernal equinox. For when they hear all this, people are satisfied and believe it; drawing as they do conviction from home, from things at hand, and with which they are familiar.

LXVI. And it is no great harm if in the first place they make the gods our common property, and not the exclusive possession of the Egyptians; instead of by confining these names to the Nile alone, and the region the Nile waters, or by talking of marshes, lotus-flowers, and god-making, thereby deprive the rest of mankind of deities of the highest order nothing to do with either—who have neither Nile, Butos, or Memphis. But Isis, and the gods connected with her, all men have and know—some of them indeed they have, not long ago, learnt to call by names brought from Egypt; but of each one they knew and revered the power from time immemorial. And secondly, and what is more important—let them take good heed, and fear lest they unwittingly degrade and resolve divine beings into winds and currents and sowings and ploughings, and affections of the earth, and changes of seasons; like as those who say that Bacchus is *wine*, Vulcan *flame*; and, as Cleanthes somewhere or other says, that Proserpine means the air that pervades the crops, and is slaughtered; and as a poet has it:—

“What time the youths cut Ceres, limb from limb.”

For these persons differ in no respect from such as should consider sails, cables, and anchor as a pilot, or yarn and thread as a weaver; or a jug and basin as a potter, or else honeyed potions and gruel as a physician.

LXVII. But those theorists engender horrible and impious notions, who apply the names of deities to natural productions and to things that be without sense, without life, and necessarily consumed by men in want of

and making use of them. For these things themselves it is impossible to conceive as gods (for we cannot conceive God as an inanimate thing, subject to man), but from these productions we have drawn the inference that they who created them, and bestow, and dispense them to us constantly and sufficiently, are gods—not different gods amongst different people, nor Barbarian or Grecian, of the South or of the North—but like as the Sun, Moon, Sky, Earth, Sea, are the common property of all men, but yet are called by different names by different nations; in the same manner, as one reason regulates all things, and one Providence directs, and subordinate Powers are appointed over all things, yet different honors and titles are by custom assigned to them amongst different peoples: and these have established, and do employ, *symbols*, some obscure, some more intelligible, in order to lead the understanding into things divine. And this not without danger: for some having entirely missed their meaning, have slid into *superstition*; whilst others shunning every superstition like a quagmire, have unknowingly fallen into *Atheism* as down a precipice.

[Another allusion to the spread of Christianity, the preachers of which drew their strongest arguments from the, apparently, absurd symbolism of the old religions.]

LXVIII. For which cause it is especially fitting in this case that we borrow from Philosophy *Reason* for our guide, and so consider each particular of the things told and done: in order that we may not, as Theodorus expresses it, “when he offers words with his right hand some of his hearers take them with their left;” in the same way we should go wrong by taking in a different sense what the laws have ordained well concerning sacrifices and festivals. For that we ought to construe all things according to their sense, we may learn from these people themselves of whom we are treating: for on the nineteenth day of the first month they hold a festival to Hermes, and eat honey and figs, repeating “A sweet thing is the Truth;” and again the charm which Isis hangs about her neck is interpreted as “A TRUE VOICE:” [Translation of the Coptic inscription upon the amulet, perhaps the famous “Abracadabra.”] and Harpocrates we must not regard as an incomplete and infant god, or some sort of pulse, but as presiding over and correcting men’s notions of the deities, when as yet new, incomplete, and inarticulate; for which reason he has his finger laid upon his mouth in token of reticence and silence. And in the month Messori, they serve up pulse, repeating “The Tongue is Fortune, the Tongue is a deity,” and of all the plants growing in Egypt they say the Persea is the most sacred to the gods, because its fruit resembles a *heart*, and its leaf a *tongue*. For of all that man possesses by nature nothing is more divine than speech, especially that which concerns the gods; nor has anything

greater weight towards his happiness: wherefore I enjoin [Some words are lost here; the sense requires, I enjoin on you in these matters, as the priests do him, &c.] upon him that goes down here [Delphi, where many of these small treatises were written, as appears from incidental remarks.] to consult the oracle “to think religiously, to speak auspiciously:” but most people act ridiculously, when in the processions and festivals they bid us speak auspiciously, whilst they both speak and think most blasphemously about the gods themselves.

LXIX. In what manner therefore must we conduct those melancholy, laughterless, and mournful sacrifices, if it is neither right to omit what is established by custom, nor yet to adulterate our notions about the gods, and disorder them with absurd fancies? For amongst the Greeks also many things are done (and at the same time of year too) resembling the Egyptian ceremonies: for at Athens the women fast at the Thesmophoria, seated on the ground; and the Boeotians “move the house of Achaea,” naming the festival “Epachthe;” as though Ceres were in mourning on account of the descent of her daughter into the shades. Moreover, this month coincides with the rising of the Pleiads, which the Egyptians call Athor, the Athenians Pyanepsion, and the Boeotians Damatrios; the Western nations [The Celts; the regular expression for them in the early Greek writers.] also, as Theopompus relates, consider and call the winter Saturn, the summer Venus, and the spring Proserpine; and believe that all things come out of Saturn [This seems connected with the belief of the Gauls that they sprung from *Dis Pater*, as Caesar mentions.] and Venus. But the Phrygians believing that God sleeps by winter, but wakes up in spring, at the one time hold with revelry the feasts of his “Going to bed,” at the other those of his “Getting up:” whilst the Paphlagonians say He is bound down and imprisoned by winter, but loosened, and set in motion by spring.

LXX. The time of year too suggests a suspicion that the mourning takes place upon the burial of the corn; which corn, indeed, those of old time did not regard as *gods*, but as *gifts* of the gods, both great and indispensable to the not living savagely and like the beasts: and at what season they saw the fruits of the trees vanishing entirely, and failing them, whilst those they themselves had sown as yet sparingly and clumsily, scraping away the soil with their hands, and covering them over again, so depositing them with the uncertainty of their reappearing and arriving at maturity—they used to do many things like to those that *bury* and that *mourn*:—and then, just as we say that one that buys the *works* of Plato, buys *Plato*; and he acts *Menander* that represents Menander’s *plays*, so did they not scruple to



call by the names of the gods the gifts and creations of the gods; doing them honor and reverence by use: whilst those who came after, receiving these names without understanding, and ignorantly transferring to the gods the vicissitudes of the seed corn, and not merely calling, but believing the appearances and concealments of the necessities of life, “births” and “destructions” of gods, filled their heads with absurd, wicked and confused ideas.

LXXI. And yet people, having in view the absurdity of the contradiction, like Xenophanes of Colophon, and those following him, who said “that the Egyptians, if they believe in gods, do not *mourn* for them, and if they mourn for them do not *believe* in them;” but that it was ridiculous to lament and in the same breath to pray for the seed corn to show itself again, and ripen itself, in order that it may be again consumed and mourned for. But such is not really the case; for they mourn for the seed corn, but pray to the gods, the givers and authors of the same, to make more anew and cause it to spring up in the place of that which has perished. Whence there is a very good maxim amongst philosophers, “that they who learn not how rightly to understand *names* make a bad use of *things*;” just as those Greeks that have not learnt or accustomed themselves to call the brazen, painted, and marble images, not *ornaments* and *honors* of gods, but *actual gods*, in the next place do not scruple to say that Lachares stripped Minerva bare; that Dionysius cropped an Apollo that wore curls of gold; that the Capitoline Jupiter was burnt and perished in the Civil Wars. Let them learn therefore that they are led astray, and imbibe false notions, modelled upon the *names*. This is especially the case of the Egyptians with respect to the animals to which honors are paid; whereas the Greeks in this particular, at all events, both speak and believe correctly, saying that the dove is the sacred animal of Venus, the dragon [Crested serpent, much resembling the Hindoo cobra.] of Minerva, the raven of Apollo, the dog of Diana (as Euripides hath it—

“Thou wilt be a dog, torch-bearing Dian’s pet”).

But the most part of the Egyptians, by worshipping the sacred animals, and treating them as gods, have not only covered their rites with ridicule and mockery; although this is the least evil resulting from their simplicity; for a horrible belief grows up that gives over the weak-minded and innocent to superstition pure and unmitigated, whilst the acuter and bolder sort it leads into atheistical and bestial incredulity: hence it is not out of place to discuss the subject in the way that seems most appropriate to treat it.

LXXII. The notion that the gods changed themselves into these animals

out of fear of Typhon, as it were hiding themselves in the bodies of ibises, dogs, and hawks, exceeds in absurdity every kind of jugglery and fabulous tale. Also the notion that the *new births* of the souls of the deceased, so many as continue to exist, is merely the being born again under these shapes, is equally incredible. And of such as attempt to assign some political cause for these legends, some pretend that Osiris upon his great expedition divided his forces into several parts (“companies” and “ranks” the Greeks call them), and gave them badges of the figures of animals, each of which became sacred and venerated by the family of those banded under it. Others, that the succeeding kings, for the sake of striking terror unto their adversaries, used to make their appearance in the battles wearing the heads of wild beasts made of gold and silver: but one of these clever and ingenious monarchs, they tell, observing that the Egyptians were naturally fickle and disposed to change and innovation, because they were easily cajoled, whilst from their numbers they possessed irresistible and ungovernable strength in unanimity and joint action—on that account taught them an everlasting superstition in the sowing of the ground, as a pretext for unceasing dissension among themselves. For, inasmuch as the beasts, different kinds of which he ordered different tribes to honor and worship, behave with ill-will and hostility towards each other, and are respectively inclined by nature to live upon different sorts of food, each party, in defending their own animals and being indignant when they suffered harm, should unwittingly be involved and compromised in quarrels against each other through the enmities between the different beasts. For even at the present day the people of Lycopolis are the only Egyptians that eat the sheep, because the Wolf, whom they worship, does the same; and the Oxyrynchites on one day, when the people of Cynopolis (Dog-Town) were eating the fish called Oxyrynchus, collected dogs and sacrificed and eat them as victims; and from this occasion setting to war, they handled each other roughly, and afterwards being punished for it by the Romans, were equally ill-treated.

LXXIII. And as many pretend that the soul of Typhon himself is divided amongst these animals, the fable may be thought to express enigmatically that every irrational and bestial nature belongs to the share of the Evil Spirit: and that people in order to propitiate and soothe Him, treat these animals well, and do them worship: and if a long and severe drought should come on, inducing to an extraordinary degree either pestilential diseases, or other strange and inexplicable calamities, then some of these honored animals do the priests lead out in darkness, quietly and in silence, and at first they threaten and scare away the creature; but if it remains fixed, [The ceremony of the scape-goat.] then they consecrate and

sacrifice it, as though this were some kind of punishment for its deity, or else a great mean of purification in the greatest emergencies. For in the city Idisthyas they used to burn men alive, as Manetho relates, calling them “Typhonians,” and by tossing their ashes in a winnowing-fan made away with and scattered the same. This, however, was done publicly, every year, in the Dogdays, whereas the sacrificings of the worshipped animals are *secret*, taking place at irregular times according to the emergency, and are unknown to the commonality, except at what time the animals receive burial, when the priests produce some of the other animals, and in the presence of all throw them along with the rest into the grave; thinking to retaliate upon Typhon’s conduct and to prevent what he delights in. For the apis, along with a few others, is reputed sacred to Osiris, and if this explanation be true, I am of opinion it indicates what we are in search of in the case of the animals that are acknowledged and have joint honors with him, for instance, the ibis, the hawk, the baboon, and the apis himself; for so do they call the goat, that is, at Mendes.

LXXIV. There remains the *utilitarian* and *symbolical* part of the question, where some of these figures partake of one quality, some of the other, many of both combined. The ox, the sheep, the ichneumon, it is evident they venerated on account of their usefulness to man, just as the Lemnians do the larks that seek out and break the eggs of the locusts; and the Thessalians the storks, because when their land bred many snakes the birds made their appearance, and destroyed them all; wherefore they made a law that whosoever killed a stork should be banished the country. The asp, weasel, beetle,—because they discerned in them certain faint reflections of the power of the gods, like that of the sun in raindrops. And of the weasel many hold and say that as it is impregnated through the ear, and brings forth its young through the mouth, it is a similitude of the generation of Reason; whilst the beetle has no female, all being males, and discharge their semen into the material they have rolled into balls, which they roll along, pushing it with their feet as they walk in the opposite direction, in the same manner as the sun seems to surround the heavens backwards, whilst he himself is travelling from west to east. The asp as being immortal and capable of motion without limbs, with equal facility and suppleness, they likened to a star.

LXXV. Not even the crocodile receives honors that are devoid of any plausible reason, for it is said to have been made an emblem of the Deity, as being the sole animal destitute of a tongue. For the Divine Reason stands not in need of voice, but walking along a silent path and rule, guides mortal affairs according to justice; and the crocodile alone, of things living

in liquid, veils its eyes with a thin transparent membrane which it draws down from the upper lid, so as to see without being seen, which is the attribute of the Supreme Deity; and wherever in the ground the female may have laid her eggs, that place they know is beyond reach of the rising of the Nile, because she cannot lay eggs in the wet, and yet is afraid to lay them at a distance from the water; so exactly do they foresee the future that they make use of the advancing river as they are bringing forth and hatching, and yet keep the eggs dry and free from damp, for they lay sixty and hatched them in as many days, and so many years live those that live longest, the which number is the first measure to the phenomena in the heavens. Again, as regards the animals worshipped—concerning the dog we have already spoken, but the ibis, besides destroying the venomous reptiles, first taught men the use of medicinal purging, when they observed the bird using clysters and getting cleared out by herself. Those of the priests that be most observant of rules, when they sanctify themselves use for the water of purification that out of which an ibis has drunk, because it neither drinks unwholesome or poisoned water, and does not even go near it, whilst by the relative position of its legs to each other (and the beak), it forms an equilateral triangle; besides, the variation and mixture of the black feathers with the white resembles the figure of the half moon.

LXXVI. We ought not to wonder at the Egyptians being so pleased with these imperfect resemblances; the Greeks too, in their painted and in their sculptured images of the gods, have employed many things of the same kind; for example, in Crete there was a statue of Jupiter, which had no ears, because it behoves the Ruler and Lord of gods to hearken unto no one; at the side of his Minerva, Phidias has placed the serpent; at the side of the Venus at Elis, the tortoise, implying that virgins stand in need of watching after, but home-keeping and silence are suitable to married women; and Neptune's trident is an emblem of the third place which the sea occupies, assigned to it after sky and air, on which account *Amphitrite* and the *Tritons* have been so named [as derived from τριτος]. The Pythagoreans have even adorned numbers and geometrical figures with the appellations of the gods; for the equilateral triangle they have named Minerva, "born out of the head," and "Tritogeneia," because it is described by three lines drawn from the angles: Unity they call *Apollo*; and by a plausible pretext, when the unit is doubled, the Two they name *strife* and *audacity*: but the Three they call *justice*, for it seems that wronging and being wronged exists by means of deficiency and excess, but what is just stands in the middle by reason of *equality*: and what is called the Four (the six and thirty), was their mightiest oath, as has been commonly reported; and the world [Allusive to the primary sense of κοσμος, order,



*arrangement.*] has been so denominated because it was completed by the four first elements, and the four superfluous qualities being joined together into One. If, therefore, the most illustrious philosophers when they discerned an emblem of the Divinity even in lifeless and incorporeal things did not think right to neglect or slight any of them, still less, I fancy, did they do so, [The early Egyptians.] when they discerned moral qualities in natural objects endowed with sense, possessing life, passions, and tempers.

LXXVII. We must therefore put up with, not indeed their paying honors to these creatures, but their discerning through their medium (as in clearer mirrors) the work of Nature; and conceiving rightly that which is Divine as being the *instrument* and *act* of the God who ordereth all things. And it is right that nothing without a soul be held superior to that with a soul, or that which is without sense to what possesses sense, not even though one should bring together all the gold and emeralds that are in the world (for Divinity does not reside in uses, forms, and polish), but those things hold a place lower in estimation than the dead, whatever neither have participated, nor by their nature can participate in life; whereas that Nature which lives and sees, and has the final cause of motive from within itself, as also the knowledge both of what is its own and that of others, and besides, hath derived an influence and a portion from the Wisdom by which the universe (according to Heraclitus) is governed. For which reason, the Deity is not worse shadowed forth in these things, than in artistic works in bronze, which, while equally susceptible of decay and defilement, are by their nature devoid of perception and understanding. As regards the worshipped animals, therefore, this explanation I approve of the most of all those offered.

LXXVIII. Now to treat of the vestments of Isis, differing in their colors (for her power relates to Matter, as it turns itself into and embraces all things—light, darkness, day, night, life, death, beginning, end), whereas that of Osiris has no shadow nor variation but one, simple, the image of light; for pure is the Final Cause, and free from mixture the Primal and Intelligible. Wherefore, when they have once for all taken off that (vestment) they put it away, and preserve it out of sight and untouched. Whereas those of Isis they use on many occasions, because the objects of sense, being obvious and in constant use, present many *unfoldings* and exhibitions of themselves, as they succeed one after the other, whereas the conception of the Intelligible, the Unmixed, and the Holy, shines through at once, like a flash of lightning, touches the soul, and allows itself to be seen. For which reason Plato and Aristotle termed this part of philosophy “Speculative,” because they passed over in reasoning these apparent, heterogeneous,

and multiform ideas, and soar up towards the Primal, the Simple, and the Everlasting, and when they touch in any way the clear truth concerning these matters they think that philosophy is complete, and has gained its end.

LXXIX. And what the present priests of these days darkly reveal, making scruples about it, and disguising it with caution, namely, that this deity presides over and is king of the dead (being no other than the Hades and Pluto amongst the Greeks)—since it is not known in what sense the doctrine is true, disturbs the minds of the vulgar, when they have the idea that the sacred and truly holy Osiris dwells *in* the earth, and *under* the earth, where are hidden the corpses of such as seem to have come to an end. But He Himself dwells at the greatest distance from the earth, being unmixed, undefiled, and pure from all nature admitting of corruption and of death; but the souls of men here below, enveloped in bodies and passions, have no participation in the Deity, except as far as lies in grasping Him by conception, like an indistinct dream, by means of philosophy; but where they are set free and migrate to the Formless, Invisible, Impassive, and Good, then this God becomes leader and king over them, whilst they hang, as it were, upon him, and contemplate without ever being satiated, and long for that Beauty which can neither be spoken nor described—for which the old legend makes Isis desire, seek after, and dwell with, and fills things here below, whatever partake of birth, with all things beautiful and good. Such notions as these, then, have a sense best befitting the idea of the deity.

LXXX. And if I must speak of the kinds of Incense offered on their respective days (as I promised), let the reader before all things bear in mind that men have always felt the greatest anxiety about practices connected with health, especially as to religious ceremonies, purifications, and ways of living; this being done no less on account of religion than of health, because they did not consider it fitting to worship with festering or sickly bodies or souls, that which is pure, entirely exempt from decay, and free from pollution. And inasmuch as the air of which we make the most use and have most to do with, does not always keep the same constitution, but at night is condensed and weighs down the body, and disposes the soul to gloom and thoughtfulness, becoming, as it were, misty and heavy, therefore as soon as they get up they burn for incense *Resin*, thereby rectifying and purifying the air by its virtue, and blowing away the corrupted exhalation naturally given forth by the body, because this perfume possesses a strong and penetrating quality; and again at mid-day, perceiving that the sun draws strongly out of the earth a heavy exhalation,

and mixes it with the air, they burn *Myrrh*, because its hot nature dissolves and disperses the turbid and muddy element in the surrounding air; in fact, physicians think they counteract pestilential diseases by making a great blaze, on the supposition that it subtilizes the air. It subtilizes it better, if they burn woods of a dry nature, such as of cypress, juniper, and pine. Acron, therefore, the physician at Athens during the Great Plague, is said to have gained credit by ordering fires to be burnt by the side of the sick, for he benefited them not a little thereby. And Aristotle asserts that the sweet smelling exhalations of perfumes, flowers, and meadows, conduce no less to health than to enjoyment, because by their warmth and subtileness, they spread themselves through the brain, which is by nature cold and in a state of congelation, and if amongst the Egyptians they call myrrh “Bal,” and this word interpreted signifies pretty nearly “sweeping out of evacuations,” the name furnishes some evidence to my explanation of the reason for which it is used.

LXXXI. The *κυφί* is composed of sixteen ingredients: honey, wine, raisins, sweet-rush, resin, myrrh, frankincense, *seselis*, and besides, of calamus, asphalt, *thryon*, dock, and besides these of both *arceuthids* (one of which is called the greater, the other the less), and cardamums, and orris-root. These are compounded not at random, but sacred books are read aloud to the perfume-makers, whilst they are mixing the ingredients. And as for their number, if it certainly looks like a square made out of a square, and alone containing the equal number an equal number of times, and to bring its external measurement exactly equal to the area, this accidental circumstance must by no means be said to contribute nothing to this effect: but the majority of the ingredients possessing aromatical properties, send out a sweet breath and salubrious exhalation, whereby, when the air is changed and the body excited in the proper manner, they are [Rather, “they of themselves lull people to sleep.”] themselves lulled to sleep, and have a seductive tendency; whilst the troublesomeness and tension of our daily anxieties they loosen and untie, like so many knots; and the imaginative and prophetic part of dreams, they brighten up and render more clear, like as it were a mirror, to no less degree than do the tunes on the lyre which the Pythagoreans used to play before going to sleep; thus charming down and doctoring the irrational and passionate portion of the soul. For things smelt at often call back the failing sense, often on the other hand blunt and stupify the same; their evaporations diffusing themselves through the body by reason of their subtilty in the same way as some physicians say that sleep is produced when the exhalations from the food taken, creeping gently, and as it were feeling their way around the inward parts, cause a kind of tickling. The *κυφί* they

use both as a drink and as a composition [pastile]; for taken in drink, it is thought to purge the intestines, having the property of loosening the bowels.

LXXXII. And apart from these considerations, *resin* is the work of the Sun; whilst the shrubs drop their tears of myrrh under the influence of the Moon: whereas the *kuqi* is compounded of those things that delight most in night, inasmuch as they are made by Nature to be nourished by cold airs, shade, dews, and moisture: because the light of day is one and unmixed (for Pindar says, “the Sun rushes through empty aether”), whereas the night air is a compound and medley of many lights and properties; as it were, of seeds showered down from every star into one place. With good cause then do the firstnamed perfumes, as being simple and deriving their origin from the Sun, exhibit their virtues by day, whereas the last-mentioned do so when night begins to set in.

